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IN A SYRIAN SADDLE

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BY

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111
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"INNER JERUSALEM," "OUTER ISLES," ETC.

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THIS RECORD IS DEDICATED
BY THE LADY
TO THE DOCTOR
ON THE EVE OF STARTING TOGETHER UPON A
LONGER JOURNEY

CONTENTS

IN MOAB

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. GOING TO JERICHO	I
II. STEPPING EASTWARD	20
III. MADABA	51
IV. MSHATTA	64
V. AMMÂN	93
VI. JERASH, AND THE FORDS OF JABBOK	116
VII. ES-SALT	145
VIII. THE JORDAN VALLEY	161

IN GALILEE AND SAMARIA

I. TO NABLUS	178
II. TO SAMARIA	194
III. TO TAANAK AND MEGIDDO	217
IV. HAIFA AND CARMEL	244
V. NAZARETH AND TABOR	258
VI. THE SEA OF GALILEE	277
VII. TIBERIAS AND BESAN	302
VIII. WEST OF THE JORDAN	323
INDEX	347

IN A SYRIAN SADDLE

IN MOAB

CHAPTER I

GOING TO JERICHO

“A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho”

LIFE is, in many respects, made very easy in the Holy Land. You can return home in the afternoon with no anxious forebodings as to how much waste of time is awaiting you in the shape of cards and notes on the hall table; you may wear clothes for covering, you may eat for nourishment; without taking thought for fashion in the one case, or of competition with your neighbour's cook or gardener in the other. But—according to our Occidental standards—you cannot consistently indulge any taste you may happen to have for being grand. Your attempts at a London, or shall we say a suburban, drawing-room, your “At Home” days, your Europeanised service, the dress of your

womankind—distantly reminiscent of the ladies' papers and of Answers to Correspondents—are certain to be complicated by some *contretemps* provocative only of mirth. The Oriental himself makes no attempt at being consistent. When you arrive at his house he spreads a priceless carpet, but omits to remove last week's dust from off the furniture; he gives you perfumed coffee, which is like a dream of Olympus, and his servant brings you a piece of bread in his fingers.

These reflections, and many more, were suggested during the waiting which accompanied our start in the early sunrise at half-past five on Saturday, 3rd October 1903. No one could have guessed how grand we really were, and there were moments then, and later, when the fact escaped even our own notice. We four, the Lady, the Doctor (of various forms of scholarship) and the two Sportsmen, were the chosen and proud companions of the Professor; and the Professor, besides being the greatest epigraphist in Europe, was the representative of a Royal Personage, and armed with all the permits and safe-conducts and special privileges useful in a land of cholera, quarantine, and backsheesh. Our eight horses

were innocent of grooming, and their equipment was fastened together mainly with tin tacks, pieces of rope, and bits of string; but it would have been difficult to find in England any animal to whom you could have proposed, still less with whom you could have carried through, one tithe of what our ragged regiment accomplished. Our two grooms, *mukaris*, appealed to certain senses as vaguely horsey, though they suggested nothing more distinguished than stable-helpers; but their management of eight animals, under conditions which seemed especially designed for their destruction, when there was not a blade of grass, perhaps for a whole day not a drop of water; when they were ridden for ten, twelve, or even fourteen hours at a stretch with merely an hour's rest—without forage—at noon, would have done credit to any groom at Badminton or Berkeley. As we proposed to ourselves both pleasure and profit we took no servants—still less a dragoman. Our portable food had been very carefully selected, and was the best obtainable. Bread, eggs, chickens, grapes, and lemons we could count upon getting as we went along.

Each member of the party had clothing and a blanket in a pair of saddle-bags—mostly of

goats' hair or camels' hair, gaily decorated with coloured tassels—and these, with an extra pair for the baskets of food, spirit-lamps, plates, knives, and tin cups, were distributed among the three baggage animals, who also carried, in turn, the two mukaris, perched on the top of the pile, but capable of climbing up and down with incredibly rapid agility.

At length the cavalcade was ready, and we turned our faces towards Jericho. First came the Professor, on a tall, white Circassian horse, with a tail which almost swept the ground, and was dyed with henna for protection from the Evil One, who was further defied, by each of us, by means of a large blue bead hanging round the neck of every horse on a coloured worsted rope. The Professor himself exhibited five foot of humanity, mostly brains; a personality which consisted, to the eye, of a large scarlet and gold silk *keffeeye* (head covering) with a goats' hair *akal* (rope to keep it in place) and an elaborate silk fringe, below which emerged a pair of black leggings, into one of which a whip was jauntily stuck. He was mounted on a peaked, military saddle, and he alone of all the party refused to be separated from his saddle-bags, which contained an assortment of cigars, cigarettes,

tobacco, and the long wooden pipe, for use in the saddle, such as is in favour with the Bedu.

Next came the Lady, mounted on a long-legged Arab steed, several sizes too large for her, but selected for her use mainly because he could do the *rahwân*, the light canter special to the desert horses, and which reduces fatigue to a minimum. It was discovered, later in the day, that he was also capable, apparently, of running for the Derby, an incident which may as well be recorded at once, as it resulted in his banishment to the second class, and the society of the mukaris.

The road from Jerusalem to Jericho still retains the character recorded some two thousand years ago, but the thieves among whom you inevitably fall are now licensed by the Government. There is a whole village full of them, called Abu-dis, and they have the privilege of protecting travellers from Bethany to Jericho—that is, of enforcing payment for preventing anyone else from robbing you. It is but some few years ago that an Englishman, suspected of seeking to dispense with this advantage, had his donkey shot under him. At Bethany, accordingly, we were joined by our escort, but, as became our dignity, he was an officer,

picturesquely attired, and mounted, unfortunately, on a beautiful Arab mare. The misfortune lay in the fact that all our horses, with one exception, were stallions, most of whom became restless and uneasy, that of the Professor so unmanageable that our escort was compelled to leave us, and to take to bypaths from which he could, more or less, keep us in sight. Nevertheless, even the temporary companionship had somewhat excited the entire cavalcade. We were all in good spirits, and it must be confessed that there was a certain amount of what may be called "fooling"—of what we would not for worlds describe as "showing off," but, rather, as trying the paces of our steeds—an amusement which the Professor saw reason, later, to forbid entirely.

The road to Jericho is a descent of over three thousand feet, but at a point nearly half way, a long and steep climb brings you from the transverse valley Sa'b-el-Meshak to the Khan of the Good Samaritan. At this point it occurred to the Lady's horse to have a private exhibition on his own account, and to set off at a truly breakneck gallop, with which no other animal in the party could possibly compete, even had it been wise to follow, except at a considerable distance. Her strength

was quite inadequate to check him, but in the length and steepness of the hill lay promise of safety, and it was with infinite relief that he was seen to pull up at last. He had no vice, but the occasion was not one for a steeplechase, and it was decided that, on the morrow, there should be a "general post" of horses, the mukari being made responsible for his Derby winner, and the Professor arranging, by exchange with one of the Sportsmen, to ride an animal which would admit of conversation with the officer, for such attainments as our leader's have not been achieved by sitting in a library, or by confinement to the professorial chair of his university, but rather by personal intercourse with the Arabs in the various dialects of their own clans, by life in the desert, and association with wandering tribes in the unexplored districts of the Peræa Haurân and of Central Arabia.

The Sportsmen carried guns, the Doctor a notebook—though he was more than suspected of yearning for a rifle,—the revolver which he carried at his belt being better adapted for the murder of man than of beast—not that the murder of man, to judge from the experiences of earlier travellers, was a wholly improbable contingency. Our road led us along almost the entire

length of the north and east wall of Jerusalem ; we then crossed the bridge over the Kedron valley — the brook, if any exist, is now far below the surface ; we passed the Garden of Gethsemane, skirted the southern slope of the Mount of Olives, hastened past the filthy hovels of the little village of Bethany, crowned by the so-called Castle of Lazarus, probably the remains of a pre-crusading Benedictine convent, and finally, about seven o'clock, pulled up at what is known as the Inn of the Apostles' Fountain, just such a building as a child might draw upon a slate. As this is the only well between Bethany and Jericho it may be safely assumed that the apostles, coming up to Jerusalem, would drink here, though it is to be hoped that it was less contaminated than at present ; for even the careless natives strain the water through a sieve before allowing their animals to drink, though, nevertheless, they still acquire leeches, as the bleeding mouths of the camels and donkeys one meets along the road frequently betray. The spot has been marked by a succession of buildings ; a little white dome over the well, and some hewn stones and the ruins of an aqueduct in the hill across the road, being all that now remains of its old dignity.

Passing the Khan of the Good Samaritan—a modern inn and curiosity shop, at which you can, at your leisure, renew “a certain man’s” experiences—we paused at the top of the last hill before descending towards the Jordan valley. Here the entire neighbourhood was once commanded by a strong mediæval castle, intended, like many all over the country, for the defence of the district. The tribal marks of the Bedu to be found on its walls are of extreme interest. The hill upon which it stands is known as Tel’at ed-Dam, the hill of blood, probably from the red colour of the rock, though some have sought to identify it, by reason of the sound of the name, with the Adummim of Joshua xv. 7.

The view from this point is, in certain details, absolutely unique. You look down at the lowest spot upon the earth’s surface—the hollow of the Dead Sea, blue as the sky in the morning sunshine, flecked with cloudlike wavelets, beautiful, gay and smiling, but bitter, treacherous, and the home only of mystery and death. The water contains about twenty-five per cent. of solid substances ; no organism higher than such microbes as the bacilli of tetanus can live in it ; even swimming is almost impossible ; neither shells nor coral testify to any happier past. The water boils

at 221 degrees Fahrenheit, but the presence of chloride of magnesium makes it incredibly nauseous, while the oily quality, which it derives from chloride of calcium, makes any accidental splash upon the garments very destructive. We gratefully take in long breaths of air which, hot and dry as it is, are, we are well aware, more fresh and sweet than any we are likely to obtain during the next twenty-four hours, for only personal experience of the stifling heat of that unrivalled hollow can make it possible to realise that six and a half million tons of water which fall into the Dead Sea—a basin about the size of the Lake of Geneva, but with no outlet—have to be daily evaporated. Far away southward is the great salt district, where the salt deposit, coated with chalky limestone and clay, takes many weird forms, among which the Arabs point out Bint Shech Luth—the woman of Shech Lot.

“Of whose wickedness, even to this day, the waste land that smoketh is a testimony, and plants bearing fruit that never come to ripeness, and a standing pillar of salt is a monument of an unbelieving soul” (Wisdom x. 7).

“The waste land that smoketh” is a touch of autopic description which one remembers when,

towards sunset, great wreaths of white mist lie low in the mountain hollows, as nowhere else in Judæa. Eastward, the horizon is bounded by the long chain of the mountains of Moab, which, ever since our arrival in the country, have seemed a sort of mysterious dreamland, a limit of knowledge, the gate of fairyland, the nightly stage of the great pageant gilded and painted by the sunset. How often have we longed, like the youngest brother of the fairy tale, to ride across the wide plain, and to wander forth for a year and a day into that dim Unknown! We could hardly realise that at last the time had come and we were stepping eastward.

Below us, in the great plain, a meandering green track shows where the banks of the Jordan are offering shade and refreshment. In the nearer foreground the scanty hovels and many hotels of modern Jericho lie, embowered in tropical vegetation, and we remember with an added interest that, within even the next day or two, we shall pass through districts of three distinct flora and fauna, and, leaving behind the oaks and pines, the familiar sparrows and starlings of our Jerusalem environment, we shall rest to-night among palms and bananas, we shall hear the cry of the jackal, and smell the tracks

of the hyæna, and again, in a couple of days, find ourselves in desert surroundings, the nursery of the camel and home of the gazelle, with the scanty herbage and stalkless flora of an Alpine world.

Looking down upon the Jericho plain we note various points of interest. We distinguish the sites of three Jerichos.

First we notice, to the south, the kraal-like village of to-day, on the site of a castle and church of the Crusaders, afterwards a flourishing Moslem town, plundered by Egyptian soldiers in 1840, and subsequently destroyed by fire in 1871. It seems unlikely that it will ever recover its former position; for, apart from apparent absence of all ability for initiation on the part of the Arabs, the climate seems to have a degenerating effect upon the inhabitants. Even German perseverance, which has made habitable spots in the low maritime plains of Judæa where all other colonists had failed, could not suffice to render life here endurable, and an agricultural settlement organised within the last few years has literally *died* out. The Latins—or, as we say in England, the Roman Catholics—have also failed to establish themselves, and the Russian and Greek settlements find existence possible only under conditions of frequent change, and

the stimulus of the profits to be made out of the thousands of Russian pilgrims who come, every year, at Epiphany, for baptism in the Jordan. Last year, however, the Jordan was held to have acquired so large a proportion of cholera bacilli on its way from Tiberias, where there was a great outbreak of disease, that approach was justly forbidden by the authorities. To the west lie the remains of the Jericho of Bible history, of which, from earliest childhood, most of us have had a mental picture—the great town enclosed by walls enwreathed with vegetation, “that ancient city of palm-trees,” few of which still remain, though they were abundant as late as the seventh century; and in Jewish amulets, and marriage or divorce documents, which are commonly decorated with allegorical pictures, Jericho is still represented by a group of palms. South of the Israelitish town, and west of modern Jericho, are the remains of the Roman Jericho, which, it is interesting to remember, was presented by Anthony to Cleopatra, who, characteristically, promptly sold it to Herod for a winter home. He made of it a beautiful city, adorned with palms and gardens, and scented with the balsams for which it was long famous as an article of commerce, but which are no longer

to be found in Syria, and where, in the time of Christ, the roadsides were shaded with sycamores—not the *pseudo-platanus* with which we are familiar, and which is not a sycomore at all, but the *figus sycomorus*, the mulberry fig, which, often attaining the proportions of a handsome forest tree, still yields its wholesome and refreshing fruit among the humbler surroundings of to-day. The remains of a pool, five hundred and sixty-four feet long, part of an immense system of conduits still visible, which was the immediate cause of the fertility and beauty of the Roman Jericho, is said to indicate the whereabouts of Herod's palace.

The Jericho of crusading times was, probably, supplied with water from what is now locally known as the Ain es-Sultan (the Sultan's Spring), although its more suggestive name of Elijah's Fountain is still in use among the Christian population. Pilgrims of the fourth and fifth centuries record the tradition that it was here that the prophet healed the bitter water with salt. Salt is still thrown into a pool or cistern which, toward the end of the dry season, is found to be impregnated with noxious matter, animal or vegetable. As, before the time of the Roman water system, there was no other means of supply

it is almost certain that the ancient town must have stood near this, the only natural spring, and the site of the house of Rahab, still shown, may quite well have been in the neighbourhood indicated.

Rising almost perpendicularly a short distance beyond the Fountain of Elijah, is the Quarantana Mountain, first so called by the Crusaders, in memory of the forty days of the Temptation, although it seems to have been held sacred from a much earlier period, as there are remains of many hermitages, one of which is said to have been occupied by S. Chariton about 400 A.D.

It is a panorama wonderful not only in extent but in the amount of detail, which, in the cloudless air of the East, we are enabled to distinguish, and we would willingly pause longer, but the sun is high in the heavens, we have been six hours in the saddle, and, leaving our horses to follow, we find a pleasant relief from the glare in descending an almost perpendicular path into the Wady Kelt, the deep gorge of the brook Cherith, where a monastery marks the site of the alleged hiding-place of the prophet Elijah. It is perched on a narrow shelf, high up on the perpendicular rock wall of the ravine, and can

only have acquired its present resemblance to domestic architecture by slow and painful labour. The lower storey, of rough massive stones, apparently designed for a fortress, is all that remains of an ancient monastery, founded in 535, possibly upon the site of an earlier habitation of the Essenes, an esoteric sect of Jews, whose life somewhat resembled that of the religious Orders among Christians. The cave, high up in the face of the rock, alleged to have been occupied by Elijah, is now an oratory for the Greek monks, who, in 1880, returned to an old foundation of Koziba, and built an upper storey, with projecting balconies, from which one has a wonderful view of the gorge below.

We left our horses upon a little bridge, which spans the bed of the brook—where they found welcome shelter, after their giddy descent, under a vine-covered pergola—and then, following a zigzag path, we made our way within the doors of one of the many hospitable monasteries which, all over the Holy Land, are ready to offer at least shade and water, the two great boons of a hot country, to the weary and thirsty traveller. No question was made as to creed, even as to that of our officer, a Moslem, and we were allowed to spread the meal we had with us, with

kindly additions of water for drink and ablution, coffee, liqueur, and fresh green lemons.

Ignoring all question as to whether the prophet were fed by Arabs or by orabs (ravens) it is at least a pleasing sight to watch the relations of the wild birds of the gorge with his modern representatives. The old superior of the convent, silent, calm, with an expression of infinite resignation to the poverty, in every sense, of his ascetic life, seemed to recover some faint and passing interest in the beautiful world about him as, bidding us be silent within the window, he stepped out on to the balcony, and produced from his pocket some dried figs. Scarcely raising his voice, he called gently, *Idoo sudar ! Idoo sudar !*—or such his cry sounded—Russian, as we understood, for “Come along, sir !” The blue air was flecked with gold, a morsel of the fruit was seized as it was thrown into the air, there was another flash of golden wings, and on the head, shoulders, and the extended arms of the old man there perched the exquisite blackbirds of the district—the “Tristram’s grakle” of the Dead Sea. The sheen of the deep purple wing, with its orange lining, was wonderfully rich, and the creatures themselves were, in every movement, graceful as swallows.

The dainties finished, there was an instant flutter, and not a sign remained in all the clear, blue heaven of our visitors of a moment ago ; only a shimmer of silver on the opposite cliff showed where a cloud of rock pigeons had descended to inquire into the cause of excitement among their neighbours.

After a couple of hours' rest we went on our way, following the narrow path which crept along the precipice, and looking with equal wonderment at the rocky hermitages above our heads and at those beneath our feet ; some which seemed to be accessible only to birds, while others were so deep down in the narrow gorge that the necessities of life have to be lowered to them from a roughly-formed crane upon a narrow shelf of level ground above.

It was interesting to notice that, even among men of similar religious impulses, and identical occupations and opportunities, individual character nevertheless finds occasion for expression. While some dwelt in holes in the rock, accessible only by a ladder, sometimes of rope, and in one case, by a voluntary asceticism, only by a pole, others showed a tendency to make the best of the situation—two or three had constructed gardens, verandahs, or porticos ; one

dwelling at least would have been described by an auctioneer as a *cottage orné*, and some had even shown an æsthetic realisation of what was befitting the situation, and had sought after effects of colour and form as well as of convenience. Not a human being was to be seen, but we wondered how many pairs of eyes were watching our movements; whether it were possible that the sound of our cheery voices, and the sight of our enjoyment, may not have touched some heart to sense of loss, have sounded some chord of regret, or even of remorse, have recalled memories of other days, when friendship and anticipation and sympathy and glad companionship were theirs, and life was other than the awaiting of death, and the setting sun brought a sense of something added to the days that were gone as well as of something subtracted from such as might—in God's providence—remain.

Our horses followed slowly down the glen, and the afterglow was beautifying even the desolate village of Jericho as we finally remounted and rode in among the groves of orange and banana.

CHAPTER II

STEPPING EASTWARD

“The dewy ground was dark and cold ;
Behind all gloomy to behold ;
And stepping *eastward* seemed to be
A kind of heavenly destiny.”

W. WORDSWORTH

THE Jericho hotels were closed for the season, but with the connivance of the negro caretaker and of an Arab in charge of the adjoining orange-gardens we obtained entrance at one, and managed to provide ourselves with firing and an excellent supper, and, subsequently, with beds. The Lady, who alone of the party carried a watch, heard the negro awakening the Professor next morning with the information that it was three o'clock, and added greatly to her popularity by being in a position to call out an assurance that it was only one, and that two hours' further repose was permissible. The building, it should be mentioned, being constructed mainly of wood and of mud bricks was well adapted for distant conversation.

Three o'clock, however, duly arrived, all too soon, and by four o'clock we had breakfasted and were on our way across the sandy plain which stretches for about two hours between Jericho and the Jordan. A few faint streaks in the east promised the coming day, but it was still so dark that our horses required all our attention, as the plain is full of holes; twice over a silver gleam ahead warned us of fords to be crossed, and from time to time dark masses rose up before us, and those riding in advance called to the others to avoid the spreading branches of the jujube-tree, *zizyphus lotus* and *zizyphus spina Christi*, called by the Arabs *nebk* and *sidr*, which are the octopods of vegetable life, sending out long tentacles armed with fierce thorns, capable of subtracting your head-gear, entering your saddle, and imprisoning your horse.

The ride across the plain of Jordan, interesting at any time to persons of imagination, was unspeakably weird and suggestive in the morning twilight, but we differed as to whether the world in which we found ourselves was one in course of construction or of disintegration. Some of us were of opinion that the giant sand-hills—a labyrinth of marl and salt deposit, worn

by winds and washed by winter torrents, an old sea bottom—which crumble at a touch, and which resemble castles, churches, towers, domes, minarets, whole towns of every variety of architecture, suggested an artist's dream of a world to be; while others maintained that they were the images, in the mind of a philosopher, dwelling upon the past. There was no limit to the tricks which fancy might play in such surroundings, a nearer *fata morgana*; a dream materialised as it created itself; a poem precipitated as it was sung: castles in Spain in which each of us saw some reminder of his personal aspirations: the land of By-and-by; the ruins of Yesterday; the house of Never, according to our individual temperament and faculty.

Riding was not very rapid during the first hour and more, so that it was nearly seven o'clock when we reached the Jordan bridge—the Rubicon between Palestine and Moab, an exceedingly rickety wooden structure, of which the only effective part is the door at either end, designed for the enforcement of backsheesh. The river is embowered in trees, a variety of willow known as the *safsaf*, various acacias, the *farnesiana*, not yet filling the air with its delicious scent, the *tortilis*, and *seyal*—with the

long spines, which are found even on many plants innocent as lambs elsewhere, but fully armed in this land of thorns and thistles—the *zakkum*, resembling a large box-tree, also provided with strong thorns, the inevitable jujube *zizyphus*, the crimson-flowered oleander, which is as seldom out of blossom as is the gorse on our English moors, above all, the Jordan tamarisk, inseparable in one's memory from this river and its surroundings, green, graceful, and, in comparison with its many-armed and aggressive neighbours, gentle and friendly.

We had plenty of leisure to observe these details, for our arrangements with the guardians of the bridge involved not only inquiry, discussion, and the gratification of considerable curiosity but also consumption of coffee and distribution of backsheesh. The scene about us was animated and full of variety. The bridge may not be crossed before sunrise, and our arrival was timely, for types of the whole desert population seemed to have just arrived, and were pausing to reorganise their caravans. A group of fellahin, the agricultural labourers of the country, were bargaining with the Bedu, whose lands they are employed to cultivate at a wage of one-third of the profits, for the Bedu toil

not neither do they spin. They are the sons of the desert, freedom is their birthright, and the fellah, compared with them, is as the "linnet born within the cage" to one who has always "known the summer woods." With his scanty white robe, his black head-cloth or keffeye, his huge akal of camels' hair, he is probably not less ragged than the blue-robed fellah, but he has an air of indescribable dignity. Utterly independent of his surroundings, he is as unaffected by hunger or the absence of all the necessities of life, as a Highland chief, and, like him, is proud not of the mere outside conditions of life but, literally, of the blood in his veins. "I suppose you are descended from Abraham?" someone remarked to an old Bedawin of this district.

"Oh no; Abraham was not at all of good family," he replied.

The Circassians, too, are there, with wide-skirted coats and astrachan caps; the Turcomans, with flashes of scarlet and yellow where Arabs would be wearing white or blue—to say nothing of certain Government officials, savouring of town life, in tarbush and European boots.

Various animals of the desert are there: camels that are graceful and asses that are intelligent; horses with the manes and tails

which Nature intended for them ; stallions of the fellahin and mares of the Bedu ; oxen and goats and sheep and, as link with the wilder creatures, the pariah dog and the feral cat. There is a whole armoury of weapons, mostly of the kind adapted for a provincial museum, from a match-lock to a modern breech-loader, from a two-edged dagger to a cavalry sabre, from a horn-handled kitchen knife to the dainty instrument with which, with some futility, one of the party is manicuring his nails.

We begin to realise that we have said good-bye not only to roads, and sheets and tablecloths, but almost to humanity, for it seems as if the entire population were leaving the country towards which our faces are set. There is shouting in half-a-dozen languages—our own little party habitually provides five—there is the utter disorder combined with the perfect courtesy, which contrasts so strongly with the general order and personal indifference, of what we of the West suppose to be a higher civilisation.

The Lady showed her sense of the new order of things by betaking herself to a second stirrup ; for, when you have to hang on to precipices by your eyelids, climb pathless mountains in the dark, descend over solid rock, slippery and

defenceless, or over shale which disappears beneath your horse's feet ; when you may expect to be ten, twelve, or even fourteen hours a day in the saddle—and such a saddle as one is likely to obtain in the East—a Hyde Park seat does not afford all the security and convenience which anxious friends can desire. There was not enough leather in our outfit to go round, and as that second stirrup hung on by a piece of string it afforded an excellent measure of temperature, distance, and individual mood. “When in doubt” upon any question—if someone were desperate for a halt, when the party became scattered and consequent waiting provided a few odd minutes of spare time, when conversation failed or anyone were aching for occupation, if any member of the party had a sudden access of politeness and wished to exhibit interest or pay a little attention to the suddenly-remembered female sex—there was always that second stirrup to fall back upon. In the morning the string had lengthened with the night-dews, but as the day went on and each cavalier had added an attentive knot, the rider would allege that she had become as lopsided as a London milkwoman. By-and-by the knots tautened, the perpetual pull of a

thousand feet of ascent or descent, as the case might be, strained the string to its utmost, and the stirrup became inaccessible ; after dusk she was suspected of dispensing with it altogether. The whole position was an excellent illustration of the misfit of the privileges claimed as "women's rights!" Nevertheless, it said something for the worth of the compromise, that she never once dismounted on account of the nature of the ground, that she brought home her animal with sound knees, that both horse and rider came back as fresh as they started, and that the company were loud in declaring that their patience was unexhausted and that they were ready, if any shred survived, to begin operations again upon that string to-morrow.

The Professor and the Lady had both changed horses ; he for one which, however much elated by his position, could yet be induced to behave discreetly in the neighbourhood of the Bedawi mare ; she for one which, although incapable of the much-vaunted *rahwân*, could nevertheless be kept within such bounds as befitted ascent of pathless precipices, and progress over the dry beds of mountain streams. It was probably owing to the superior lightness of the burden he had to carry that her new steed, Sadowi, a

light-limbed grey, was, like his predecessor, generally ahead of all the party. The Professor's long-legged mount and the active wide-flanked slender-headed mare of the officer, were of course the official leaders of the expedition, and the Lady did her utmost to sustain a modest retirement into the background. But her task was not easy, not only because of the personal ambitions of Sadowi, but on account of certain human vices on the part of the Professor's horse, for which the usual *cherchez la femme* was the occasion. The Bedawy beauty, with whom he carried on an active flirtation, was, on Oriental principles, *haram* (forbidden) to anyone else, and he refused to tolerate the neighbourhood of any other horse, looking round perpetually with an evil expression of suspicion and hatred, worthy only of his human superiors. When Sadowi passed him he turned aside to bite him in the act; when the Lady succeeded in keeping in the rear he kicked out at irregular intervals, on the chance of the proximity of his rival.

The coffee served to us pending our arrangements at the Jordan bridge was more than welcome, for we had almost forgotten our half-past-three-o'clock breakfast, and the feast of the

eye ceased, after a time, to suffice the appetite. Some of us had built our hopes on private stores of chocolate ; but chocolate, in the East, even in October, has its drawback, from a tendency to trickle out of the corners of one's pockets in tell-tale streams which are not appetising. The humble peppermint, of the quality stamped "Extra Strong," reminiscent of the smell of afternoon church in the country, may rather be recommended, as allaying both hunger and thirst, the latter probably by stimulus of the salivary gland. Meat lozenges and other devices of the amateur traveller share the fate of the chocolate ; bread becomes rusk and, like biscuit, is provocative of thirst ; raisins, except of the kind which at home we dedicate to puddings, are, strange to say, unknown ; and figs and dates with no water to wash them in, are—here where we know their antecedents—for most of us out of the question. One of our mukaris went about with a necklace of figs threaded on a string, from which he subtracted as occasion suggested. He had learned the art of the simplification of life : he drank almost anything that was wet, ate as has been described, never, so far as was known, undressed, and slept anywhere except, apparently, in a bed, but for choice

on the top of one of the baggage animals whenever the road in any degree approached the horizontal. His only luxury was his water-pipe, which he produced at every moment of leisure, trusting to his companion to keep it alight without any unnecessary expenditure of *tombak*, the special tobacco used for the narghile, whenever duty called him away. He was to such a degree a man of resource and expedient that a story which the Professor told us, though, as a matter of fact, observed elsewhere, might just as well have been applied to him. Some mukari in the Professor's employ had also a water-pipe, but seems to have been fastidious, which Khalil was not, and on one occasion was seen looking around for something which might be conveniently inserted into the bottle-shaped vase which holds the water, and in which a ring of scum had formed upon the glass. His eye fell upon a neighbouring donkey. He seized the beast's tail, twisted it into a convenient bottle brush, performed the required ablution, and returned it to the astonished owner, who, however, with the usual intelligence of the Palestine ass, made no remark upon the subject.

In Syria the greatest difficulty in locomotion,

except backsheesh, for which it is the pretext, is quarantine. It is easy enough to cross the Jordan bridge eastward on payment of a toll of three piasters (about 7d.), for man and beast, but it may not be so easy to get back again, as quarantine may be imposed at any hour, and may last for any length of time. It was necessary, therefore, to make it clear to the official mind that, by special favour, we were to be allowed to return without let or hindrance, whatever might have occurred in the interval. That, in the name of Allah, would be as Allah and certain exalted persons willed, we were piously assured, and finally, with much hand-shaking and invocation—May peace go with you! May your path be broad! May your day be blessed!—the gates were opened, and in a few minutes we were east of the River Jordan, which in the rainy season is at least one hundred feet wide, but was now only one-third of that distance.

A plain some four or five hours broad—for here all measurement is by time, at the rate of three or four miles an hour, according to the nature of the country—lay between us and the foot of the hills, although during all the months we had looked longingly at them from the hills of Judæa they had seemed to rise almost

perpendicularly from the banks of the Jordan and of the Dead Sea.

Our destination before nightfall was Madaba, which lies 2940 feet above sea level. Starting from the valley of the Dead Sea, 1292 feet below the Mediterranean, and with the wide plain of the Jordan valley to cross before the ascent could begin, it was evident we must reserve our force for the precipitous climb of over 4000 feet which awaited us, and we accordingly kept our horses in check, although the sandy plain offered temptation for a canter. We had abundance of interest. The Sportsmen hardly expected to meet with the lions which formerly infested the thickets of the Jordan, but traces of wild boar might be looked for, also hyænas, jackals, and foxes (which it is considered legitimate to *shoot*) both the desert fox, *canis niloticus*, and the *canis variegatus*, smaller than the English fox, with a grey back, black breast, and a large bushy tail. Cheetahs are occasionally found in the district we were approaching, the wild cat, *felis caligata*, though rare, is not unknown, of gazelles we should doubtless see plenty in the mountains, the ibex, with huge horns, might be expected among the rocks of the highest points; and the sight of

a wolf was not wholly impossible. However, the immediate expectation, considering the hour, the place, and the sounds which accompanied our cavalcade—for nothing short of personal danger can silence an Arab—was rather of bird than of beast. The first prize in the mind of the Sportsmen was the francolin, much valued in Syria as a pot-shot. It is something between a pheasant and a partridge, of dark grey plumage, very strong both to run and fly, and with a powerful call. Partridges, too, came within their ambitions, and the partridge of Syria is indeed game worth the powder. Down here, in the plains, the Hey's partridge, *ammoperdix heyi*, with its delicate plumage, a soft grey touched with richest blue, is the most common; but as we advance the larger Greek partridge, the *caccabis saxatilis*, awaits us, among the rocks and boulders of the mountain passes. Pigeons and sand-grouse, and the large Indian turtle-dove, *turtur risorius*, were abundant, but the wedge-tailed raven, *corvus affinis*, with his whistling cry and jackdaw-like air of gaiety, did not show until we reached the cliffs of a higher district.

The Lady openly exulted in the lack of accessible game, and grudged even the occasional

shots fired, as disturbing to the smaller creatures in which she found delight — the grakle, the blackbird with orange under wings with whom we had already made friends by the brook Cherith, whose bell-like note sounded from tree to tree, the dainty sun-bird, *cinnyrís oseæ*, whose metallic sheen flashed in and out of the tamarisk-trees, the delicate-hued Moabite sparrow, the aristocrat of his family, who ran up reeds and tree trunks like the familiar tits at home. We were too early to see the flights of birds of passage on their way south to warmer climes, and which, before and after the winter months, pause in the thickets of the Jordan basin, and fill the air with music, which includes the notes of the cuckoo and the nightingale, and recalls, however irrelevantly, Browning's "Oh, to be in England, now that April's here!" We had hoped to see the busy little jerboa, a jumping mouse with long hind legs, like a microscopic kangaroo, but circumstances were, for the present, against us, chiefly the noise of our cavalcade. He is a friendly little beast, and easily tamed, and though familiar with him in confinement we should have liked to see him under happier conditions.

We could not have happened on a more

unfortunate season for flowers; the wonderful flora of the Jordan valley was now at rest, and even the autumn squills, the delicate muscari, and a few lingering silenae had been left behind on the higher ground the other side of Jericho. The only feast of colour was the oleander, familiar to most of us as a greenhouse shrub, and which here rose with its rich crimson or pure white flowers, single or double, wherever a little water remained to keep the earth moist about its roots. We speculated as to what might be its nearest cousin in our northern latitudes, and the wildest guesses were made, including the rhododendron, mezereum, daphne, and syringa, but no one thought of the familiar periwinkle, with its shining trails and sapphire blooms, in habit and appearance so utterly dissimilar, but which also belongs to the family of *apocynacea*, or dog-bane. In spite of its rich colouring and welcome beauty, the oleander bush is highly poisonous, affecting even the water in which it grows. A story is told of some French soldiers in the Peninsular War who utilised some of its twigs to serve as spits for roasting meat, with the result that seven out of twelve who ate of it shortly died.

We knew better than to expect to find "Jericho

roses" in the Jericho district, although this curious and interesting crucifer *anastatica* exists in considerable quantities about Masada, towards Engedi, some twenty hours south. It is an annual, and its curious blossoms are formed in the spring. We found, however, many specimens of the Dead Sea fruit, though still green and unripe. It is an asclepiad, *calotropis procera*, called by the Arabs *oshr*, and is strictly subtropical. The fruit, the "apple of Sodom" of Josephus, has an inflated, leathery skin, which, when crushed, leaves in the hand only fibres and bits of rind. The stalk has a strong milky juice. The name is also given to the *solanum sanctum*, of the family of the potato, which also resembles an apple, and is red, with black seeds.

Tristram has happily described the high lands above the Jordan valley as a "watershed . . . the fruitful mother of many infant wadys," a *wady* being a river bed, and as we made our way along the Wady Heshban, almost due east, turning southward later in the day, we had glimpses of many of these glens, and we even forded a couple of streams on their way down to the Jordan before, towards noon, we found ourselves at the foot of the mountains. A clear running stream, a little grove of trees, were a

temptation not to be resisted. In a moment we were off our horses, although, unfortunately, not in time to prevent the baggage animals—left for an instant by the mukaris, who hastened to receive our weary steeds—from refreshing themselves in their own fashion, by a roll in the cool water, oblivious of their encumbrances, or, possibly, possessed of some vague notion of debarrassing themselves of a superfluity. They had been travelling between seven and eight hours, and for the last two in intense heat, not only overhead but, from radiation of the light sandy soil, underfoot. We could not feel angry with them, and all cheerfully helped the Lady to hang her entire wardrobe and personal belongings upon the projecting branches of the jujube-trees, useful for once, as it was her saddle-bags which had suffered most, although a supply of cake, gingerbread, and chocolate was reduced to a condition uneatable by any but the mukaris, who considered the incident an acceptable dispensation of Providence, or, in their own phrase, *maktoub*—"it is decreed."

A few Bedu under the farther trees were the first human beings we had met since leaving Jericho except some camel-drivers who, silent and statuesque, their flocks of many scores

of stately camels equally silent and pictorial, had seemed rather to be a part of the landscape than to have any human relation with ourselves. One of the group came forward, and greeted us in such fluent German that we at first took him for some agricultural speculator buying seed or seeking labourers from among the fellahin; for the agriculture—that is the organised, not to say scientific, agriculture of Palestine—is practically in the hands of Germans and Jews. However, he turned out to be a native, educated at one of the many German schools of Jerusalem, or elsewhere, at one time an employé of the Austrian post office, on his way, alone, with a dagger and a revolver for sole companions, to visit some property at Madaba. On hearing that this was our destination he begged permission to join our cavalcade, which the Professor readily granted, as the remaining journey, among the mountains, was especially solitary. We were very grateful for coffee and an excellent lunch of sausage, potted meat, and jam, with white bread, brought from Jerusalem, the last European bread we were likely to see. We ate our dainties with some sense of guilt, and a shamefaced sensation of geographical and historical anachronism, as the Professor, without waiting for

our feast to be unpacked and spread, produced from some secret recess three parcels, one of which was laid aside for the moment, though with a promissory glance at the Lady, which she knew denoted instruction in view. The other two proved to be bags, one containing dates, the other figs, "Dates and figs," we were informed, "were the natural food of desert wanderers, sufficing to the body, stimulating to the mind; the wheat, the flesh, above all the alcohol, of civilisation, were mere irrelevancies." Here some of us sought to conceal our sandwiches and withdraw our anticipations from private flasks. "Was it not diet such as this," and he waved a pair of sensitive hands over his ascetic larder, "which had enabled him to reply to the inquiry of a Personage as to how many hours a day he could ride in the desert — 'Twenty-four, your Majesty, since the day does not contain twenty-five, and a man will endure anything for the sake of his miserable life'? For was it not on a diet of figs and dates that he had ridden sixty hours without dismounting, resting only for two hours, when he dropped out of the saddle, just one hour's ride from friends and safety? Was it your meat-eater, your wine-drinker, who remained sound and

wholesome when necessity obliged him to refrain from ablution for twenty-one days? ‘If a man must be a pig or die of thirst, your Majesty,’ he had submitted to the Personage in question, ‘will he not rather be a pig?’ a sentiment with which even royalty heartily concurred.” At this point he carefully counted his date stones, observed that two more were yet due to his appetite, and, having finished his frugal luncheon, drew from the saddle-bag deposited beside him his native pipe, some eighteen inches long, of which the clay head and wooden stem were carefully and separately wrapped in paper, filled it with strong tobacco, and lighted it with a mysterious paper match, laid atop, which smouldered for a perceptible time, and set fire to the precious fuel. Someone, anxious, perhaps, for the just distribution of human praise and blame, unwisely murmured that “tobacco was a luxury.” The Professor withdrew his pipe to describe the less costly “smokes” of desert life. The paths across the desert of Central Arabia have been the same, probably, since the earliest ages. Man, camel-mounted, with the same dress, food, purpose, habits, has crossed those golden sands for æons as, and where, he crosses them now. The living of to-day are treading the dust of yesterday,

and amid that dust we may look not only for bleached bones and hypophosphates, but even for the decomposed dust of camel droppings. These, dried and purified, it may be, by centuries, are the substitute for tobacco of desert life. The Professor would not acknowledge any ability to give a personal opinion of its quality, but the Sportsmen, adventurous in this as in all else, were suspected later, when we reached the camel district, of making a personal experiment in the interests of science, with what results it was never revealed.

The Professor emptied his pipe, and, calling the attention of the Lady, opened his third parcel, which proved to contain a large square of white net. "Such a treasure as this," he admonished her, "you would do well to acquire. It is a luxury of travel. When I wish for repose I envelop myself. It averts flies and mosquitoes, and is a hint to my companions that I do not desire conversation." So saying, he modestly withdrew into its folds, and only a neat little pair of black boots emerging from—apparently—a bridal veil, remained to indicate his personality.

The rest of us drew our keffeyes before our eyes, laid our heads upon any sloping sub-

stance that offered itself, and neither man nor beast needed further inducement to enter into the land of dreams.

At two o'clock we were again in the saddle, conscious of between 3000 and 4000 feet to climb. Our faces were set eastward, but we knew that we had to reach a point above and beyond Mount Nebo, which lay immediately south, "to climb where Moses stood, and view the landscape o'er." Very soon the shrubs, which had hitherto been at least our occasional companions, were left behind, and, perpetually climbing, we began to realise that we had entered a new world. The limestone, dolomite, and gravel limestone of Judæa had largely given place to a formation different alike in colour and outline—mainly red sand-stone, often of very fantastic features, and a certain amount of basalt—later, as we came still farther south, masses of green-stone and boulders of pudding-stone. The green-stone is embedded in and streaked with a deep olive grey, but in places is as green as malachite. Tristram points out that a dip in the strata brings the limestone again in places to the surface, which probably accounts for the varied colouring of the cliffs—black, red, and white—which, in the clear, brilliant

sunshine, is dazzling in its effect. The great tableland of Moab lies about 4000 feet above the Dead Sea valley, and slopes gently eastward for some twenty-five miles, beyond which rises another range of hills (limestone), the watershed of Moab, and the frontier of Arabia, whose blue distances we afterwards came to feel as a new limitation, which we longed to cross, as formerly we had longed to cross the hills of Moab.

For miles we saw no sign of human life, no cultivation, no domestic animal, only wide stretches of bare rock and a scant vegetation, which seemed, although so burnt as to be difficult to distinguish, mainly sandwort and soapwort. Now and then a flash of shadow showed that a lizard had darted away, but even small birds were rare. When the wide zigzag, which always seemed to turn horizontally just as we had begun to make advance, allowed us, from time to time, to cast glimpses westward at the mountains of Judæa, we were much astonished at their height and grandeur. A prophet has no honour in his own country, and we had no conception that the familiar range would have so much dignity from afar. Finally, we reached a tableland, a wide terrace, before arriving at

the foot of the farther range of mountains, which we must still pass.

We halted beneath a solitary tree, and were thankful for the contents of our water-bottles. Glass bottles cased with straw and packed in saddle-bags were almost hot enough to make tea from, whereas the German military flasks of the Sportsmen, with felt coverings damped before starting, and hooked to the saddle, provided a deliciously cool drink. Mount Nebo, which had all day dominated the landscape southwards to our right, had much dwindled in importance, and indeed the end of our journey would bring us to an elevation 600 feet its superior; and there are indeed many points from which Moses might have had a much finer panorama of the promised land than that conventionally pointed out.

Very soon we begin to climb the farther and final range, and to enter into a district in which the human interest again awoke, not the less strongly that it was connected with a past which, in England, we should consider remote, but which we describe here as “merely Roman”—that is to say, not quite two thousand years ago. The Roman road, which we followed for some distance, is in much better condition than, for

example, the road between Jerusalem and Jaffa, or Jerusalem and Bethlehem, in spite of the heavy road tax which, theoretically, keeps them in order, and the milestones, though prostrate, are still of imperial dignity—massive columns some six or eight feet in height.

Other columns and great hewn stones are scattered here and there by the roadside, telling of a grandeur that is past, of a civilisation with which we have nothing to compare. Another chapter in human history had been recently suggested by a great dolmen, worthy of Stonehenge; some of us longed to turn aside to examine it more closely, as it was the first we had seen in this country, although they are very abundant east of Jordan, especially in the district lying between Heshbon and the hot springs of Callirhoe.

An almost perpendicular climb, which the heavier among the party thought it only merciful to accomplish on foot, brought us to the summit of the farther range, the Tell el Matâba, marked by an extensive stone circle, from whence we practically looked down on Mount Nebo, and soon found ourselves in entirely changed surroundings. Here and there signs of cultivation, a couple of fellahin carrying a plough, a donkey

bearing a sack of grain and driven by women, all spoke of the neighbourhood of human habitation. A great plateau gently sloping upward to the east, the fertile Ard 'Abdallah, lay open before us, and we knew that beyond the gentle slopes lay the city of Madaba, of which, at present, there was no indication, except that of the industry of its inhabitants—or at least the industry which its neighbourhood made possible. On a slight eminence stood the tomb of 'Abdallah, of whom we could learn only that he was a great shech, as was testified by the symbols displayed upon his tombstone: a mortar for preparing, an iron spoon for roasting, a pot for boiling, and a cup for drinking, the coffee, which was the symbol of his unlimited hospitality.

Thoughts crowded into our minds with rapid confusion. We had seen too much; disentangling was difficult. The stone circle, the dolmen burial monument of some primeval race, may have been looked upon by Moses in those sad, closing hours of a disappointed life—by Balaam and Balak wandering from point to point, from one high place of Baal to another, among these hills, seeking for some spot whence the prophet might feel himself inspired to curse the tents of Israel, who had made such havoc up yonder in

Heshbon, and along the very wady we had crossed. We remembered how the cities of Moab were described by Ezekiel as "the glory of the country," and yet how her inhabitants were warned by Jeremiah "to flee and get away, for the cities thereof shall be desolate." We saw, in fancy, the Roman soldiers of the tenth legion, the military colonies, the Græco-Roman culture, the Christian, the Persian influence; finally, in strange rivalry with powers so strong, so highly developed, the Arab, who for thirteen hundred years has lived among the ruins of the past, not, on the whole, actively destructive but living only for each day's need; initiating nothing, saving nothing from decay, not even seeking to preserve a tree or repair a cistern, and whose finest monument, among all these ruins of the past, is that of a shech who dispensed much coffee! He has held the country longer than anyone else, as the eagle his eyrie or the wolf his lair, and as we advanced each day farther and farther into the desolation of the present, more and more closely in touch with the traces of the grandeur of the past, we felt that here, at least, was a race perfectly adapted to the environment it had, in great degree, created for itself.

Our tired horses, conscious of twelve hours of work already past, were thankful for level ground, and took fresh heart as we pursued a fairly good path, between wide expanses of fields, in which the harvest was not yet entirely over ; that wonderful Syrian harvest, which seems to be going on continuously, here or there, during quite half the year, from May to October. We, also weary, let the reins fall loose and wandered on thus meditating, the Professor and our officer to the front, the mukaris bringing up the rear. Suddenly we were conscious of a slight shock to our body corporate, and, looking up, perceived that the Professor and the officer were in colloquy with a body of some six or eight wild-looking Arabs, their swarthy countenances looking the darker and more savage for their black keffeyes and akals.

At this moment our Sportsmen rode up, one of whom spoke Arabic like a native, and the Professor, waving a dignified negative, rode ahead. We joined him, and turning our horses looked back at the scene in progress. The leader of the attacking party was in hot argument with the Sportsman, who responded to his shouts and gestures with the cool imperturbability which, of all European characteristics,

is most surprising to the Arab, while our mukaris, hastily collecting the baggage animals, and casting an anxious glance ahead at the horses we were riding, hovered timorously in the rear. As a mere accidental coincidence we observed that another of the band had fallen upon an unlucky fellah, who rode up at the moment, knocked him off his donkey, and was beating him—casually as it appeared—but probably *pour encourager les autres*—namely, our mukaris. They demanded, as we afterwards learnt, a tax upon every horse in our company before permitting us to enter the town of Madaba, which they represented. “If you belong to Madaba then accompany us to Madaba, where we will pay any tax which appears to be just,” replied our Sportsman calmly, “but it seems to me you are highwaymen,” and so saying he, with our other Sportsman, our second mukari with two baggage animals, and our German - speaking Arab companion, rode on, and joined our distant group, Khalil, our chief mukari, who was held responsible for all the horses, being retained as hostage. With the usual cowardice of an Arab, in spite of the Sportsman’s assurances that he would “see him through,” he very foolishly produced his purse,

satisfied their demands, and rode on triumphant. The chatter that ensued among our three Arab companions—for nothing in the world excites an Arab like a question of money—can only be compared to a rookery at sunset. One had a rare opportunity of appreciating the alleged variety of the Arabic vocabulary ; its adaptation to utterances of anger, vituperation, and regret. “They claimed, they got, fifty-nine piasters” was the burden of the song, and we had it in solo, antiphon, chorus, refrain, with a hundred variations, all the rest of the way to Madaba. On our arrival we found that our brigands belonged to Es-Salt, a town eight hours N.E. of Jericho (Madaba being a good ten hours S.E.), and entirely unconnected with this district ; that the tax which they claimed was a war tax, just now enforced by the Government upon every man in his own town, so that our poor Khalil would have to pay it over again on his return to Jerusalem. With this fact, however, we did not at present acquaint him.

CHAPTER III

MADABA

“Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?”

R. BROWNING

AFTER fourteen hours in the saddle we were thankful to dismount at the friendly door of the presbytery at Madaba, where, by kind permission of the Latin Patriarch in Jerusalem, we were admitted to enjoy the hospitality of the parish priest, a Piedmontese, and his assistant, an Arab, both speaking excellent French, as well as Italian, the official language of the patriarchal clergy.

We found their reception room crowded with a group of some dozen villagers, prominent among whom was a dignified-looking shech, who at once claimed acquaintance with the Professor, and proved to have been his guide in this district upon a former occasion. He was engaged in a discussion with the priests, which we had evidently interrupted, and the moment opportunity permitted he returned to his point. There was nothing discourteous in

his persistence, he was obviously attempting to make a bargain, and the price offered had already, we were told, reached 200 francs. The priest met all his advances with a decided negative, which grew more and more imperative as time went on, but time is of no value to an Arab, and we could not but be reminded of the parable of the importunate widow. After a time, at the express desire of our hosts, they all withdrew into an outer room while we enjoyed our much-needed refreshment, but when we afterwards went out to look about us they returned to the charge, and we even found them still at it next morning. The very delicate point at issue was afterwards explained to us. The man, a member of the Eastern branch of the Church, desired to marry his niece, and having failed—after perhaps equal pertinacity in enforcing his point—in obtaining permission from his own priest had come to see whether it might be worth his while to change his religious views, in hope of receiving the sanction of the Latins. Apparently he thought the real question at issue was “How much?”—and from time to time, after consultation with his companions, he would raise his bid by a few piasters. Again and again the priests roundly assured him it was

of no avail; he was not to be convinced, and when we finally rode away he was sitting on a stone by the door of the presbytery. It would have been interesting to know what were the special attractions of the lady for whom he was willing to venture so much.

Madaba may best be described as a village of what, in England, we should call "squatters." They are Christian exiles from the Moslem town of Kerak, who, about 1880, took possession of a city which had been in ruins some thirteen hundred years, having been devastated, according to a learned monograph upon the subject by the Dominican Père Séjourné, most probably by Chosroes, in his destructive march to or from the north. The present population, of some 900, of whom about two-thirds are Greeks, the rest Latins, occupies a small hill about 100 feet in height, of which almost a third is debris. The new residents, in digging for foundations, have brought to light a great deal that is of extreme interest and, as naturally follows, have destroyed still more. Dr Bliss, referring to the article of Père Séjourné, and describing the town in 1895, observes that certain ruins have disappeared in the meantime, and we, in turn, failed to find others which

appear in the sketches of Professor Brünnow, also of 1895.

Madaba is undoubtedly a place very precious to the archæologist; to the merely æsthetic it is disappointing and sad. The ruin, the débris, the desecration, the filth of the last quarter of a century force themselves upon our consciousness to a degree difficult to overcome, and it requires an effort, of which we were little conscious elsewhere, to realise its former dignity. When Joshua was old and well stricken in years it must have been a little discouraging to him to learn that, besides other large tracts of country in this district, "all the plain of Madaba unto Dibân" remained to be possessed. Mesha, King of Dibân, over six hours' ride to the south, mentions upon the famous Moabite stone (897 B.C.) that it belonged to the Israelities in his period, the reign of Omri, but it afterwards passed into the possession of the Moabites, and, still later, into that of the Nabateans, who came hither from the south of Arabia. Madaba withstood Hyrcanus during a siege of six months about a century before Christ, and, during the Christian era, was the seat of a bishopric. Early in the seventh century, like many places on this side of Jordan, it disappears from history.

Madaba must have been a town of some importance, although the space enclosed within its walls was barely a quarter of a mile square. Père Séjourné, the Dominican archæologist, saw gates on the north and east which have disappeared, but indications remain of the existence of four. The population was well provided for as to water, for, in addition to two smaller reservoirs, a pool at the S.W. angle measures 108 yards long, by 103 yards wide, and 13 feet deep. It is now used as a field for the cultivation of tobacco, for as long as it served its original purpose it was the cause of constant feuds with the Bedu. There was a street of columns 150 yards in length. Bliss and Baedeker mention five churches, the Père Curé told us he had evidence of the existence of eight, for which almost disproportionate number the bishopric may account. The piety of to-day takes another form. Schumacher, in a valuable monograph (1895), relates that the former curé, Pater Biever, describing his ten years' experience among the people, related that the hardest things to teach them had been not to bring their sabres and other weapons into church and not to greet him, if they chanced to arrive while service was proceeding, with the usual

respectful but loud-voiced, *Marhabā jā chūre!* —“May thy path be broad, O priest!”

When he enunciated the teaching, “Love your enemies, do good to those that hate you,” an old shech called out: “Halt, priest! you can preach that to the old women.” In certain respects the people of Madaba stand higher than the Christians west of the Jordan, and offences against morality are very rare—among the genuine Bedu they are almost unknown. Monogamy is the rule in Madaba, though in Kerak, whence the people come, polygamy is found even among Christians, and among others is quite usual.

In matters of peace and warfare they observe the rules of the Bedu, and Schumacher quotes interesting examples of what he truly calls the sound views of honour and manliness, to be noticed even among the wild customs of these children of nature.

Their absolute disregard of the beautiful, their indifference to the abominations of their surroundings, is almost incredible. Chickens and goats defile the most exquisite mosaics; a Corinthian capital, picked up by chance, is inserted between an unhewn stone and a slab of marble; a squalid hut has a carved lintel.

Père Séjourné points out that in a small church, which Bliss describes as the most interesting which he visited, an inscription reveals the age of the building, and serves, so to speak, as a *point de repère* for others. It recites that "the mosaic work of this sanctuary and of the holy house of the altogether pure Sovereign Mother of God has been made by the care and the zeal of this town of Madaba . . . in the month of February of the year 674, indication 5"—that is, 362 of our present era. Another church, portions of which have to be sought for in several different dwellings, has been regarded as the cathedral; it is 125 feet long, with aisles twice the breadth of the nave, which is 29 feet, all in Corinthian style.

But the *pièce de résistance* at Madaba, the goal of the savant's pilgrimage, is the celebrated mosaic—the Madaba map—which, discovered in 1884, was not known to the public till 1897. We were armed with a letter from the Greek patriarch desiring that the Professor and his party might have every assistance in their investigations. We accordingly made our way to the Greek church at the foot of the rising ground upon which the town is built. They had not been aware of our coming, and

suggested that, in order that suitable preparations might be made, we should return next day, which was, unfortunately, impossible. By the time that a solid mass of dust and dirt had been laboriously removed (for the means taken for the preservation of the mosaic, render it accessible only in detached sections, each covered by glass) the twilight was so far advanced that we saw it very imperfectly, and are glad therefore not to depend upon our own impressions for a description. It is a map, in fine mosaic, of Palestine, including a part of Lower Egypt, much broken and injured at the edges, and, obviously, reduced in extent. It serves, at present, as part of the flooring of the Greek church, but, on account of its value, as possibly the oldest map of Palestine in existence, it is, very properly, covered in with glass, on a principle strongly resembling a cucumber frame.

The colours, which are various, and arranged with a view to science rather than to art, are as fresh as the day they were laid, and the mosaic is a combination of a map, a picture, and a ground plan.

Père Cléopas, a Greek priest, who is spoken of as the discoverer, although it had been

locally known for thirteen years, thus describes it: "The artist was not content to give simply the names of the towns, but, moreover, with careful pains, he shows the form, size, and plan of any town of importance; and further how many doors and gates it has, whether these lie to east or west, what important buildings it contains, what is their style, and what is the old name of the town, as well as that in use; where hills are found and where plains; where rivers and brooks and forests; where springs and where hot springs; where ponds and lakes; where boats and ships; where palms and where bananas; all these, in their natural colours, are exactly indicated upon the map."

It is worth while to give some short account of the Madaba map, not only because the history is interesting in itself, but because it is thoroughly typical of much which happens in this country. The facts are taken from a *Mémoire* presented by Mons. Clermont-Ganneau to the French Academy, and subsequently published in the *Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale*.

The discoverer of the mosaic was a Greek monk, of whom the very name has been forgotten, and who, in 1884, communicated the fact to the Greek Patriarch, who took no notice what-

ever. One feels little regret that this worthy ecclesiastic was, later, exiled to Constantinople, and succeeded by the patriarch Gerasimos, who, in 1890, six years after the original discovery, found the letter, and immediately sent off an architect with orders that the mosaic should be included in the church about to be erected at Madaba. We have the testimony of four monks that, at this time, the mosaic was almost complete, but the intelligent workman destroyed much of it in order to lay the foundations of the church, sacristy, and out-buildings; broke up part to insert a pilaster, and left much of the bordering, with its decorations of biblical imagery, outside. He then returned, with the assurance that the mosaic was unimportant.

Another six years elapsed, and Father Cléopas, librarian of the Greek patriarchate, who chanced to be arranging a visit to Jericho, was prevailed upon by Monsignor Gerasimos, who had never lost interest in the reported discovery, to continue his journey as far as Madaba, in order to report upon it. He returned in January 1897, thirteen years after the original discovery, bringing with him a sketch of the map, and some notes. M. Arvanitaki, a professional map-maker, was at once despatched to make a

drawing. He was a Greek, a member of the Astronomical Society of France, and an accomplished linguist, a matter of great importance when abbreviations and contractions had to be correctly rendered. Before his work could be finished the patriarch died, and the geometer, not being new to the little ways of Jerusalem, was about to abandon an undertaking which any succeeding patriarch might possibly repudiate, but was, fortunately, encouraged by the Franciscans, who undertook to translate the MS. of Père Cléopas into French, and to publish the work of the artist in twelve sheets of half-a-metre square. This was successfully accomplished by means of Lumière's orthochromatic plates, and was forwarded to the Academy of France on the 16th of March. The story of the misfortunes of the map was, however, not yet complete. The Greek patriarchate claimed the original drawings, and the negatives were broken on their way to Paris. M. Clermont-Ganneau, however, succeeded in reproducing them, and made them the basis of a communication to the Institute, and so of introducing the valuable "find" to the archæological world.

Meantime, Père Vincent, of the Dominican Order in Jerusalem, had made another drawing,

which was published in pamphlet form with a monograph by his learned colleague, Père Lagrange, collaborating with Père Cléopas himself. A further record was made, also early in March, by Père Germer Durand, of the Assumptionist Order, who also laid a complete photograph before the Academy of France, consisting of ten sheets, taken from above, a light scaffolding having been erected for the purpose, an experiment pronounced in the *Mémoire* as having been "carried out in the most satisfactory manner possible." Within two months, therefore, of the visit of Père Cléopas, the mosaic, neglected for thirteen years, had been the subject of three separate monographs. The representative of the English Palestine Exploration Fund made a visit to Madaba which was wholly unsuccessful, but the German architect, Paul Palmer, of Jerusalem, assisted by a couple of artists, succeeded in triumphing over many difficulties, political as well as mechanical, and has made a reproduction of the map, of the original size and colouring, which now hangs, by the desire of the patriarch, in the Greek School at Jerusalem, where it is accessible to all comers, an object of permanent value to scholars and archæologists.

The discovery has naturally given rise to a

vast amount of discussion, and has involved much reconsideration of earlier topographical conclusions. We can never sufficiently regret all that has been so gratuitously lost, although, in Palestine, one necessarily becomes somewhat hardened to losses of the kind. Trustworthy witnesses who saw the map before the mutilation recently inflicted concur in testifying that it originally recorded the position of Ephesus, Smyrna, and Constantinople, showing that it must have included Asia Minor and the Bosphorus.

And so we wrangle and regret ; we take long journeys to see this marvel of the science of at least thirteen hundred years ago ; we dispute who shall be accounted the first to perceive its worth ; what nation first presented the facts to the world ; what bearing they have upon the learning of to-day ; and, meantime, the name of the discoverer, though he may still be living, is never mentioned, and no one thinks of the human soul that imagined, the human hands that wrought—the nameless Byzantine priest into whose labours we have entered !

“Nokes outdares Stokes in azure feats.
Both gorge. Who fished the murex up?
What porridge had John Keats?”

CHAPTER IV

MSHATTA

“Thou still unravished bride of quietness,
Thou foster-child of Silence and slow Time,
Sylvan historian, who canst thus express
A flowery tale more sweetly than our rhyme.”

KEATS

THERE was so much of interest at Madaba, that we did not succeed in accomplishing the early start we had intended, and even after we were in the saddle, and had picked our way, not without difficulty, among the scattered stones, the middens, the children and dogs and chickens which occupy such open spaces as serve for paths, a native, speaking excellent German, came out of a house to suggest a visit to yet another mosaic pavement. This, however, we reluctantly declined, for, although we had a journey of but five hours in view, the sun was already high, and we had a bare plateau to traverse.

We soon left all traces of town life behind, and in little more than an hour came upon a scene which was, to many of us, a new delight : that of many hundreds of wandering camels in their

native surroundings—we had almost said their native element, so different are these creatures from the suffering, melancholy, over-worked, evil-smelling, grumbling brutes to which we are accustomed in Jerusalem. A camel to be seen to advantage requires the primeval spaces for which he was originally designed. He should stand clear against the horizon, however boundless ; the background of narrow streets, the human brutality and noise, the mud beneath feet intended for desert sands, are an injustice for which we, and not they, are to blame. Bewildered, tortured, over-driven, he acquires that air of abject dejection which he shares with the London cab-horse, that habit of futile remonstrance which we learn to associate with him, to the entire exclusion of that dignity—an undoubted part of the freedom which is his birthright—that grace, which is inseparable from the surroundings that were his when the original type, never yet adapted to human environment, was first devised.

Camels of all shades of brown and grey were there ; camels that had never had their coats disfigured by clipping nor galled with burdens ; white camels, almost dazzling against the sapphire sky, the golden plain, the purple hills ; baby camels, playful as kittens but with a puppy-like air of

solemnity, and more graceful than young colts, because better proportioned as to legs. The Bedu speak of the white camels as "blue," possibly for the same reason that an inhabitant of the Hebrides, when on the sea in stormy weather, will speak of his island by a fictitious name or, after dark, will whistle to his dogs rather than call them by name, for fear of attracting the attention of the Evil One. Many superstitions among Arabs are associated with blue, as again, the Highlander associating them with green, the colour of the fairies, will avoid naming the hue of the grass, calling it blue if adjective be necessary. The Arab puts a blue bead on his horse, a blue necklace on his child; his wife carries blue beads on her market-basket, and one is often hung over the door of the house, especially a new house. So Caliban, in the Oriental story which Shakespeare preserves for us in "The Tempest," speaks of his mother Setebos, the witch, as "a blue-eyed hag" (not "blear-eyed" into which certain commentators have corrected the original); and in a commentary upon an Arabic poem by Al Chirnik, sister of Tarafah, belonging to the early part of the seventh century, a seeress is described as "Hy, the blue-eyed one, from

the notorious people of the time of ignorance"—*i.e.* the period before the revelation of the Moslem faith.

Here and there the vast plain was dotted with the black temporary villages of the Bedu, generally arranged in a circle or square, *dooah*, around a central space upon which all the tents open, although, with some instinct of sanitation, the drapery was generally raised, both "but and ben," as they say in Scotland. The population seemed to be largely abroad, and every half mile or so we came upon a little group, more or less keeping an eye upon the herds, visible for miles, even to the farthest horizon, where they made long dados of themselves against the cloudless sky. Almost due south of us, each on its own hill, overlooking a Roman road running north and south, are two important ruins—Um Weleed (mother of children) and Um el Kuseir. They are only about half-an-hour apart, and we longed to make the short *détour* necessary to visit them, but the Professor's face was turned where duty called and we did not venture to propose the expenditure of time. Tristram describes these cities, and others lying along the same route, and thinks they may have been at least Maccabean, for

they are obviously much older than the Saracenic khans and the Roman forts, which are alike numerous in the district. He says that in all he looked in vain for any traces of Christian worship but that in each case there were the ruins of a temple, always outside the city, with the entrance to the east, and, wherever the architecture could be determined, of Doric origin; and he speculates as to whether these High Places may have originally served for Baal-worship. Another point which he notes, and which we, later, had opportunities of verifying, is the immense number of cisterns and underground storehouses, still in use by the Bedu for storage of grain and protection of flocks. It is interesting to recall that one of the commands given upon the Moabite stone, which was found but a few hours' journey south west, was "Make for yourselves every man a cistern in his house." The present names of these ruined towns, Um Weleed, Kirbet el-Herri, Zebîb, Um er-Resâs, Um el-Kuseir, and others, are all Arabic, and do not help us in identification, and trace of any other name seldom remains. They must, nevertheless, have been important; Um Weleed, for example, measures half-a-mile in length within the walls, and has suburbs in addition.

Of Ziza, however, where we halted for a short time about four hours after leaving Madaba, we find a clear record in the Roman *Notitia*, where the name occurs, unchanged by a single letter, as an important military station, "*Equites Dalmatici Illyriciani Ziza*. Here we found traces of what must have been one of the largest towns of Roman Arabia, the most prominent feature being a great tank of solid masonry, 420 by 330 feet, still larger than that at Madaba, and, although the dry season was far advanced, and the reservoir is much reduced in available extent by debris, containing still a good supply of water. Steps, so wide and shallow as to be accessible even to horses, lead down to the water; many of the single stones are over six feet in length, and the reservoir was fed by an ingenious contrivance which, aided by two sets of strong sluice gates and an embankment of earth and masonry, formerly economised all the water which, in the heavy winter rains, would come rushing along the valley and down the hill side, upon which the town was built. In various parts of the valley there are embankments, to turn the water from other gorges and depressions into this central reservoir, which is also provided

with dams in the event of flood, floods being frequent and dangerous in this country, where, in the early rains, the water rushes in torrents along the surface of the baked and hardened earth. In the neighbourhood of such provision for a large population one naturally looks for buildings of importance. Tristram observes that the tank, though of such infinite consequence as is barely conceivable to those who do not know the East, is not defended, pointing to a period of security, when the Dalmatian cavalry swept the surrounding plains and made their headquarters here and, possibly, at Castal. Against the horizon, on the crest of the ridge, are two castles, which we were unable to visit but which were described by Tristram: one a solidly-built fort, apparently Saracenic, although constructed of older materials, which, to judge from the sculpture remaining upon them, may have been the ruins of Byzantine churches, the other, to the east, is, he tells us, in a much more ruinous condition. The present remains seem to be Roman, but show traces of use as a mosque, and among the material are sculptured stones, possibly Byzantine, according to some Persian, as well as fragments of cufic inscriptions. Eastward, again, is the Roman town of

Ziza, which includes a strange aggregation such as is found in no country other than Syria. There is a fine Saracenic building, said by the Arabs to have been perfect until the Egyptian invasion of 1832; there are cufic inscriptions and sculptured crosses; an olive mill of basalt; remains of sarcophagi; and a large Christian church, of which one apse still remains standing. All these ruins suffered considerably from the wanton destruction wrought by the Egyptian troops, who, it is said, threw down a very perfect building in the town, and several entire Christian churches. Tristram was the first European to visit Mshatta and Castal as well as Ziza; the last, at the suggestion of Zadam, the son of the great shech of the Beni Sakr, the local tribe of Bedu, who, by the intervention of Klein, the German missionary famous for the discovery of the Moabite stone, accompanied Tristram as companion, and protector of the expedition. The ruins appear to have been previously pointed out to Captain, now Sir Charles, Warren, the representative of the Palestine Exploration Fund, who, however, made no investigation, so that it fell to the share of Tristram to be the discoverer of Mshatta, one of the most re-

markable architectural monuments in the world.

It was with ever-increasing eagerness of expectation that we hastened on, after asking our way from some railway workmen—Europeans—who were living in tents among the ruins, and who spoke a polyglot of Arabic, French, and Italian. Within a few minutes we crossed the line upon which they were engaged, intended—strange anachronism!—to connect Damascus with Mecca, an undertaking for which the Turkish Government deserves the credit of immense perseverance under very difficult conditions. It may be mentioned, in passing, as also to their credit, that they are now rapidly carrying out the line from Haifa northwards, undertaken some years ago by the English, and which—after the whole district had been surveyed, the line planned by the skill of Dr Schumacher, the German-American Vice-Consul at Haifa, and the work, in the hands of an English engineer and English foreman, had made some progress—was mysteriously abandoned, to the serious loss of many of the employés.

It is of this railway that Professor George Adam Smith prognosticated so hopefully, as being

the most important material innovation from the West. “. . . Not only will it open up the most fertile parts of the country, and bring back European civilisation to where it once was supreme—on the east of Jordan—but, if ever European arms return to the country—as in a contest for Egypt or for the Holy Places when may they not return?—this railway, running from the coast across the central battlefield of Palestine, will be of immense strategic value” (“Hist. Geog. of the Holy Land,” p. 20).

At the point where we cross the line the rails are not yet in place, but the iron monster will soon be here—fit symbol of an age which mocks the time that is, but creates few monuments which shall defy the time that shall be; which enables the curious to gaze at the wonders of the past, but leaves him no leisure to initiate what may survive our race, and speak, as do the ruins of Moab, to an age and a people of a distant future. We come on the wings of steam, and with all the miracles of science, but we leave no trace but unsightly heaps and a scar upon the face of the landscape. We were glad, some of us, when we had reached and crossed the unshamed anachronism, and, forgetting the noise that would break the silence of the plain, the

smoke that would soil its purity, the advertisement, the competition, with their attendant vulgarity and vice, we could throw ourselves again into the arms of Nature, and listen to the voices of our Mother Earth.

It seemed far more in keeping with our mood of the moment when, an hour or so later, we crossed the *Haj* (pilgrim) Road from Damascus to Mecca; the road, or rather aggregation of paths, some hundreds of parallel tracks, dispersed over a width of 1000 yards, alternately dividing and amalgamating, over which, for some twelve hundred years, the followers of the Prophet have passed to the visible centre and cradle of their faith. It is possible that the sons of Isaac may have trodden this very path on their way from the desert to the land of promise, for here there can be little variation in roadways, as they are determined not by mountain passes or choice of gradient, but by the presence of water. The shech of the district is responsible for the safe conduct of the pilgrimage across his territory, and it is at their own risk that any wander from the caravan. It is not many years since a body of pilgrims, tempted by some vision of a nearer route, had to be followed up when they did not reappear. A few only were saved, but two

hundred perished from thirst, and one shudders to think of the possible animal suffering involved, although, happily, most would be mounted on the long-enduring camel. The Professor told us that at times, when his caravan had lost its way in the desert at night, his mukaris would stoop down and scoop up a handful of sand some two or three inches deep, which they would smell for traces of camel droppings, showing, when they were deeper than a possible surface accident, that the travellers were on the timeworn track.

Almost involuntarily we drew rein, and paused, with mingled feelings, before this record of human emotions. Five times a day every good Moslem must turn toward Mecca, and once in a lifetime, if possible, he must journey thither in pilgrimage, either personally or by proxy. The road is strewn with the bones not only of animals but of men, who have fallen by the way, from thirst or exhaustion, it may be, or from plague and the cholera, which so constantly dog their footsteps. The Arabs have a story that a good Derwish in Mecca begged the leader of the pilgrimage to take the cholera away with him from a place where so many holy men were daily perishing. "But," said the Haj, "there are many good men in Jerusalem,

whom we can ill spare!" "Well," said the Derwish, "take it, anyway, and if Allah does not want it in Jerusalem He will send it on elsewhere"; and that, says history, as well as tradition, has happened annually ever since, for though Jerusalem is left untouched, the dread cholera accompanies the returning pilgrims almost every season, and is seldom far away from the track which lay before us.

Although many now avail themselves of the steamers on the Red Sea and Persian Gulf, thousands assemble every year at Damascus, where the holy tent of the caravan is kept, and large numbers still come, even from Circassia, Central Asia, and Northern Africa, in order to make the orthodox journey in its entirety. Formerly it was reckoned as lasting twenty-seven days but, owing to various mitigations in the difficulty of travel, the time tends, every year, to become shorter. Nevertheless, the Arabs have a saying which expresses a journey of indefinite length (much as we say "to go to Jericho"): "To go to the gate of God"; (Bab-el Allah) the gate that is, at the end of the Meidân, the suburb of Damascus, where the pilgrimage assembles, known as Bawâbet Allâh.

Though, in these days when, even among

Moslems, the tendency shows itself to minimise the duties of life, and many only contribute to the cost of the general pilgrimage, and compromise with conscience by a mere payment in money, nevertheless, even yet, custom, superstition, temporary advantage, hereditary conventionality or, it may be, pious instinct, religious fervour, cosmic yearning, avail now, as in all ages, to the direction of human conduct, and the parallel tracks are still well trodden. To us, who can enter in part only into the spirit of the East—its absolute faith in predestination, in the predetermination of salvation or perdition, in the irrelevance between religion and conduct, in the resignation which seems to us so utterly without hope, in its limitation of the relations between Man and God, its perpetual ascription of praise with but little margin for intercession—the whole position is a great mystery, and in the tramp, tramp of thousands of feet, which seems to us to echo wearily through vast avenues of time, we find it difficult to catch any note of love, or hope, or aspiration. They carry an inevitable burden of human sorrow, which is no fit offering at such a shrine as theirs; they have hopes and fears and human longings which they may confide to none but human

hearts : God is great ; there is no god but God ; all that befalls them is already decreed ; and the pilgrimage is to His glory and in no sense for their own consolation. Browning's *Epistle of an Arab Physician* recurred to the mind of some among us, with the startled utterance of the Syrian contemporary of Jesus of Nazareth :

“. . . think, Abib ; dost thou think ?
So, the All-great were the All-loving too !
So through the thunder comes a human voice
Saying : “O heart I made, a *heart* beats here !”

Thus dreaming, we journeyed on, still over vast spaces with dim horizons, bounded by low ranges of hills, showing in deep purple against the cloudless, sapphire sky.

Suddenly all was changed ! We were no longer among the unsatisfied yearnings of pilgrimage but the companions of that youngest brother in the fairy tales, whose long journeyings had so often entered into our dream of the distant lands, for were we not drawing up at the gate of the Enchanted Palace, more beautiful than any dream, more deeply mysterious than the wonders of the Arabian Nights ?

“Here all things in their place remain,
As all were ordered, ages since.
Come, Care and Pleasure, Hope and Pain,
And bring the fated fairy Prince !”

Truly the place was under a spell—here in this wide wilderness, an unfinished dream of the sculptor of a giant age, stood the Castle of Mshatta; far exceeding any description which we had read or heard; paralysing us with such awe of its beauty and mystery as seldom seizes one before the work of Man; its immensity, its majesty, the unique perfection of its workmanship, above all, its silence, its absolute mystery, seeming in unison with the vast works of Nature all around, rather than with any conception of a merely human mind.

We were speechless in presence of this monument of a race to which we could give no name, of a purpose at which we could not even guess, of aspirations never fulfilled, hopes never realised.

“Titanic forces taking birth
In divers seasons, divers climes.
For we are Ancients of the earth
And in the morning of the times.”

Tristram, after his second visit in the year 1872, returned to England, declaring that the whole question continued to be an insoluble mystery. “Even the name gave no clue, and such meaning as it may even have had as *Um shita*, “mother of winter,” presumably so called as

affording winter shelter for the flocks, is now subtracted, for although the spelling of Mashita or Meshita has been employed up to the present, even by the precise Baedeker in his English edition of 1900, the derivation is now declared fanciful, and *Mshatta* the more accurate rendering of the name.

That the problem is a difficult one is the more obvious from the very fact that it has none of the complications which beset the archæologist elsewhere. There have been no subtractions, no accretions, no changes. Hardly a ruin remains in Syria where Moslem zeal has not destroyed its sculptured imagery. Here all is perfect as when the artist laid down his chisel. Not a detail is defaced ; the few stones which may have been removed have in no degree marred its completeness ; its position has been its protection ; far alike from the ignorant zeal of the fellahin Moslem, from the misdirected industry of the town Christian, it has inherited none of the blessings of civilisation. It is still the "unravished bride of quietness." As Tristram has well said : "Too proud to cultivate, happily too careless to destroy, the incurious Bedawin has roamed over its rich pasture lands : never tempted to loosen a stone, for he needs no

building materials, and content if the old cisterns and arches afford a shelter in winter for his flocks."

In the wonderful façade upwards of fifty animals, exquisitely sculptured, in every variety of attitude, still quench their thirst in pairs, bending opposite each other, over a graceful vase; their outline, their very motion perfectly rendered; lions, lynxes, panthers, gazelle, buffaloes; here is a man with a dog, there a man carries a basket of fruit; birds hover; peacocks, storks, partridges, parrots, vaunt their beauty, with the grace of the models from which they were drawn, in days when we were living in wattled huts. The more conventional outlines—the cornices and mouldings, the continuous vandyke, with a great rose boss at every angle—although strikingly unfamiliar, are eminently satisfying to the eye, and the wonderful realism of the flowers, grapes, and vine-leaves, which fill up every remaining inch of the façade, is like a dream of Grinling Gibbon carved out in massive stone.

Where, unless in the Alhambra, or (as we learn from Fergusson, De Vogüe, Dieulafoy, and other authorities on Persian art) in remote parts of Persia, can we find anything in the least comparable to the bewildering richness of the designs which have blossomed for us here in the wilder-

ness?—far, not only from mankind, but from such gifts of nature as would make possible the presence of mankind; where, for lack of water, even the rich soil of the great tableland cannot be cultivated, and the district must for ever remain, as it has ever been, a desert! The Arabs have no traditions of this place, as they have of so many other ruins, and they do not even ascribe its foundation to Saladdin or the Khalifs, to whom all that is great is almost invariably assigned. Can a building covered with human and animal designs owe its origin to the Moslem, to whom all such representations were forbidden? Although Thompson, the author of “The Land and the Book,” proposed to consider the ruins as those of a church and convent, there is, apart from all other difficulties as to size, plan, and position, no single indication of Christian workmanship or symbol. Were the Romans likely to build a sumptuous Oriental palace in a lonely desert, far from any military road? If the Bedawy, the wandering Ishmaelite, sole denizen of deserts such as this, were for once to depart from his normal style of architecture—two or three poles and a piece of cloth—is it likely that his descendants would have preserved no tradition of so extraordinary a deviation?

One solution offered is, nevertheless, that it was the work of Byzantine architects, employed by the desert tribes, notably the Beni Sakr, in the days when they were rich with the subsidies paid to them by the Romans for protection of their colonies and forts and roads from the encroachments of other enemies of the desert ; that it was never intended as a place of residence but merely for the reception of ambassadors, who were to be over-awed, partly by the miracle of this rose of the wilderness, partly by the skill shown in the triumph over niggard Nature ; or, in the event of this being insufficient, were to be separated from their steeds, and presented with free house room until hunger, thirst, and loneliness should make them amenable. Whether the work remained incomplete from paucity of money or of ambassadors, is not revealed.

Another solution, of which Fergusson is the originator, is that it was the work of the Persian king, Chosroes II., who, between the years 611 and 614, overran the whole of Northern Syria and Asia Minor. Gibbon's enumeration, gathered from contemporary authors (Gibbon's "Decline and Fall," Chap. x. 701), of his 20,000 camels and 3000 concubines, his 960 elephants and 6000 horses, suggests, at least, that he had the money for the

building of artistic palaces, and the fact that he spent the years of his youth at Hierapolis, where he had ample opportunity for studying the art and culture of Asia Minor, may suggest, further, that he possibly had the taste. These kings of the Sassanian dynasty were, indeed, noted for their love of architecture, and the Court favourite of Chosroes II., Ferhad, was an architect. A drawing of an ancient bas-relief at Shiraz, to be seen at the Institute of British Architects, presents Chosroes as slaying a lion, while his fair favourite, Shireen, watches Ferhad sculpturing birds and foliage upon a rock. Some forty or fifty Sassanian bas-reliefs, sculptured pictures such as those at Mshatta, still remain in various places. Moreover, we learn that Chosroes II. had thousands of Greek and Syrian slaves, whom he employed in the construction of sumptuous buildings. The site of Mshatta might well lie in his route between Damascus and the Nile. (*See* Chap. iii. p. 53.)

The sudden arrest of the work—one stone west of the entrance gate has been just laid down beside the place prepared for it, many stones have the sculpture incomplete, or merely indicated, we saw slabs upon which tentative sketches of horses had been made—might be accounted for

by the fact that, in 623, the Emperor Heraclius, "the Roman eagle swooping magnificently in her dying throes," compelled Chosroes, after only, at the utmost, fourteen years of power in Syria, to recall his troops from Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, and though, for four years, the strife was fierce between Persian and Roman, the latter ultimately triumphed, and Chosroes died miserably in a dungeon. Barely ten years later the Romans were banished by the Saracens.

The learned Professor Brünnow has made the suggestion that this building originated with the Ghassanides, the Beni Jafn, who migrated from Yemen in the first Christian century and, having been made, by the Romans, wardens of the marches of the Empire, developed later into an important dynasty; submitting even to the civilising influences of Christianity, for, in 180, Amir I. founded a monastery in Haurân. Brünnow observed the same vandyke pattern, which, however, is in itself a somewhat elementary design, upon a water jar in Jaulan, a district considerably north of Mshatta, but where, he observes, the Ghassanides were at home. Although the jar was modern it was conceivably copied from an ancient design, as was, undoubtedly, another standing beside it. Moreover, he found a pattern of double vandykes

—that is, of squares joined at the corners, upon a frieze in the same district. Other archæologists object that certain details cannot be older than Justinian, when Arabian kings held no sway near the Jordan, others doubt whether the Arabian kings ever extended their power into this unquestionably Roman province. To the mere layman it seems so probable that a row of vandykes was the first thing that Adam drew with a stick upon the sand, that he fails to find in it anything distinctive enough to form the basis of a historical or architectural theory.

The entrance, with its magnificent façade, is to the south, the sculpture, extending over 156 feet in the centre of the face, is broken by a gateway, and rises to the height of 18 feet. Behind this is a quadrangle, 170 yards square, at each angle a round bastion, and five others, semicircular, between them. On the south front alone there are six, the central gateway being flanked by two, boldly octagonal, and magnificently sculptured. The interior is best described as being divided into three portions, by parallel lines running north and south, the side ones about 46, the centre about 66, yards in width. The centre one has been divided into three sections; that nearest the gate, which is

portioned into many chambers, was probably intended for a guard house; the second may have been an open space, with a fountain, and the third or northernmost was the palace itself. This consists of brick walls, resting on three courses of stone, the bricks, of somewhat curious form, resembling, it is said, those of no known building, except a ruined palace north-east of Damascus, described by Tyrwhitt Drake and Sir Richard Burton. They are like Roman tiles, but larger and thinner, 3 inches thick and about 18 inches square. The palace is divided into twenty-four rooms, the entrance hall being about 50 feet square, four others being perhaps two-thirds of that size. The entrance is through a wide doorway, with massive pilasters and elaborate capitals, with ornamentation, possibly, of Persian or Egyptian—certainly not of Greek—design. Architects have perplexed themselves over the problem, still unsolved, as to how the palace was lighted, as there is not a single window from without, and within only a few small round openings over the doors. Bliss, of Beirut, the distinguished American archæologist, conjectures that the large halls were unroofed, and that the smaller rooms opened upon them, a plan quite consistent with the Oriental con-

ception of a house, originally derived from tents opening into a central space, and developing, first into rooms opening into a court, and, later, into the modern house, in which all rooms on both floors open into a leewan, or central apartment.

Naturally, all these observations were made later, for it was our privilege to remain for some nights within the palace walls, where, amid kind and hospitable friends, and in comfortable tents, bearing the familiar initials T. I. W. (Thames Iron Works), relics of the abandoned English railway, we found leisure to rest and to dream. Some of us found the spell of fairyland so strong that little else than dream seemed possible. Never, perhaps, so loud as here, did we "hear the East a-calling,"

"something which possessed
The darkness of the world, delight,
Life, anguish, death, immortal love
Ceasing not, mingled, unrepressed
Apart from space, withholding time,
But flattering the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid."

It was, perhaps, bathos, on our part, but we wished Tennyson had known enough Arabic to write *Er-Rashid*!

How far it all seemed from the littlenesses

we have learned to confuse with realities—"the greeting where no kindness is," "the dreary intercourse of daily life"!

"We grew in gladness, till we found
Our spirits in the golden age."

Our thoughts turned to dear ones far away as, we may fancy, do those of some who have gone from among us, so far removed we seemed even from those nearest in spirit! We were ready

"To pass with all our social ties
To silence, from the paths of men,
And every hundred years to rise
And learn the world, and sleep again."

Towards evening, when the golden light was fading from over the wide plain, we turned our steps towards the eastern hills, a long, low, limestone range, a day's ride distant, although, in the clear atmosphere, it seemed as if we might almost reach their foot in time to see the sun set. One of the soldiers in charge of our party kept us in sight all the time; for away in those dim recesses are wild tribes, who submit to no government but that of their own chief, Ibn Rashid, the great Arabian potentate, whose stronghold is far away beyond the hills, in the city of Hayil, and whom all other shechs hold

in awe. Our host, Dr Schumacher, told us that not even his Circassian soldiers, fierce and fearless as they are, would consent to accompany him beyond that plain into the district of Hadramat, and it was still with the sensation of being in touch with fairy lore that we listened while the Professor told us stories of his sojourn in that distant land, of hospitality received in that far-away stronghold, and of personal and friendly intercourse with the great chief himself. We were interested later to note the anachronism of the two cairns, on widely distant hills, remains of Dr Schumacher's survey for the great German map of East Jordan.

As our shadows lengthened we stood to watch the herds of gazelle descending into the plain; the graceful creatures, secure in their swiftness, coming so near that we could watch their movements even without our field-glasses. We had already learnt that they came down daily, towards sunset, often close to the palace walls, and our Sportsmen had long lain in wait for them there in the hope of game, but the news of the human invasion, the profane breaking of the silence, had gone forth, and the gentle creatures, having little reason to feel confidence in the lords of creation, had turned away elsewhere.

As we retraced our steps we lingered, picking up here a flint arrow-head, gift of a distant past, there a bleached snake-skin, perfect as though worn but yesterday. Other treasures, too, we found : wonderful velvety arums, crimson, purple, and black, not the large *arum palæstinum* of the spring, but a minute, dainty, fairy-like copy of it, fitly adorning this dream world ; crocuses, leafless, almost stalkless, white, mauve, and pink, rich relations of the “naked ladies” of our home meadows, and tiny pink geraniums, the lingering guests of summer.

Scarcely were we again at home, when Nature endowed us with another, and truly royal, spectacle. As the full moon rose, above our palace walls, she was eclipsed, and we stood long, watching alternately the western miracle of sunset and the eastern pageant of the slow and, as it seemed, reluctant moonrise. Some of the Arab servants watched with us, but they were of so superior a class that they showed but the faint, unimaginative interest of average civilised man elsewhere. They told us, however, of the superstitious practices still pursued by those “who knew no better”—the singing and beating of tom-toms and sacrifice of a cock. They were wonderful servants, or seemed so

to us, the slaves of the kitchen of the West. The cook produced excellent dinners, of three hot courses, upon a box of charcoal embers he could lift with one hand, and the waiters, summoned with a hand-clap, not only brought but *ran* to bring whatever you might want. Everything was spotlessly clean, and the waiting at table would have done credit to an English "Jeames." They all spoke at least three languages, and they amused our leisure moments with games and songs. The native, however, must come out somewhere, and we are bound to record that, when an imprisoned cock crowed from a small wooden box, these Arabs, who are never quiet one second themselves, took him out and whipped him!

We went to rest early in our luxurious tents, and woke next morning to find, among other miracles, that the water in our jugs was barely above freezing point.

CHAPTER V

AMMÂN

“Lost Echo sits amid the voiceless mountains.”

SHELLEY

IT was with something like the pain of a personal parting that we bade farewell to Mshatta. Our friends, too, were breaking up camp this 7th of October, and as the German flags were saluted before being taken down, we realised to the full, as sometimes happens, that here was one of those moments in life which could never recur ; that our joy in the marvellous beauty of the spot, in the indefinable fusion of Art and Nature, was such as we could never repeat. The swallows, who had made their home in the ruined palace, would soon dart and skim in consciousness of sole possession ; the lizards, when the sun became hot, would bask upon the wall as they had basked a thousand years ; the gazelles would wander fearlessly around at sunset, all would be as before, except where man had left his *imprimatur*, the scar of death and destruction that follows his tracks across the face of

Nature. The very dogs had gone already : the foolish puppy, with its woolly coat, the beautiful tawny deerhound, more light limbed, more fleet than ours, in proportion as the gazelle, his prey, exceeds our moorland deer in swiftness and in grace. The dream was past, "so sleeping, so aroused from sleep," we were on one of those tablelands of life from which no change was possible but descent to the common-place of every day. We had seen the pale moonlight on the palace walls, the purple hills we might never hope to cross ; we had had visions of an enchanted world we might never see ; we had had glimpses of a page we might never hope to turn.

"Under the arch of Life where love and death,
Terror and mystery, guard her shrine, I saw
Beauty enthroned ; and though her gaze struck awe
I drew it in as simply as my breath."

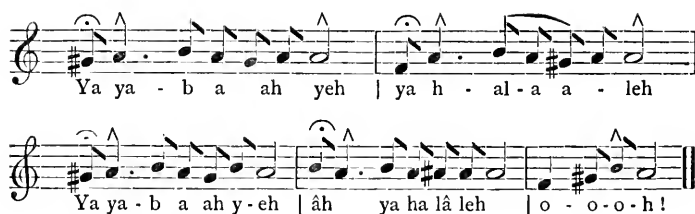
We were bound for Ammân, not more than between five and six hours' ride away, and our horses, refreshed by their rest, went gaily along the gently undulating plain. Somewhat north we came in sight of Castal, a Roman fortress, on a hill westward, which some of the party—the Sportsmen, and the Doctor—had visited yesterday, and which Tristram, its discoverer,

considered different in character, as well as superior in size, to the usual castle of look-out and defence to be found all over districts where Roman colonies and roads may have needed protection and supervision. Although the place is not mentioned in Eusebius, either in the *Itineraries* or the *Notitia*, its name is obviously Roman, and its size, for it is capable of accommodating some twelve hundred cavalry, speaks for its importance. It contains many fragments of fine white marble, not indigenous. There appear to have been two castles: the main building, on the crest of the hill, 84 yards square, of which only the lower storey remains, and a smaller building, northward, of superior workmanship, with a balustrade of fluted Corinthian squared pilasters. The ancient city, which includes remains which may be Greek, stands N.W. of the castle. During the last five years it has been occupied by Bedu, very greatly to its injury.

We had exchanged our escort, as the officer granted by the Pasha for our safe conduct was not responsible for us after we had reached Madaba. We had, accordingly, bidden him farewell before leaving, and had been touched by the fact that he had positively declined to receive a present, alleging that to do so would detract

from the honour which he had enjoyed in being permitted to accompany so distinguished a person as the Professor. The member of our party who best knew the country, cynically observed that he must have seen more profit in refusal than in acceptance! He had a good voice, and, though Arab music is certainly an acquired taste, had given us pleasure, and contributed variety to the *al-fresco* concerts we occasionally enjoyed. Among other songs had been one composed by a certain poet Nimr, whose grave we were to visit later. Silence is impossible to an Arab, and when they are not talking they sing. Our mukaris also sang, the words often being improvised out of some passing circumstance, and with nonsense rhymes.

Whether the following was the actual air or only another exactly like it, it would be impossible to say. For this we are indebted to Dr Schumacher, who found it among the 'Anazeh tribe of Bedu, said to be especially fond of both music and poetry, and who relates that, "walking in the caravan of camels, his mantle or sheepskin thrown over one shoulder and an old musket or a huge stick carried on the other, the Bedawin is heard continually chanting the following monotonous song":—



When the Arab sings he shuts his mouth, and, very literally, "sings through his nose," four notes, or rather tones, amply sufficing for a melody. When we sang they seemed vastly amused, and our younger mukari was caught more than once mimicking our gestures, beating time, and opening his mouth; while the other was in fits of laughter.

The successor of our officer was a Circassian, and, though equally picturesque, of quite a different type. In place of the flowing robe and floating keffeye of the Bedu he wore an astrachan cap, close-fitting coat, leggings tucked inside low shoes with heels, and the military cloak of the Turkish cavalry. His horse was very powerful, and always well groomed, and, what is more unusual in the Turkish army as represented in Syria, his accoutrements and harness—silver-mounted, with enamel decoration—were bright and well kept. He had all the apparent moroseness characteristic of his race,

and never spoke except under pressure ; but the Lady reported that he was kindly in rendering small services unasked, would always ride up to her if she became accidentally separated from the party, especially if she were any distance in advance, and was expert in mounting and dismounting her, although never obtruding his assistance.

About half-an-hour from Mshatta the Sportsmen sighted a herd of gazelle, and, still sore from previous disappointments, dismounted to stalk them—as usual, in vain. They vanished like smoke round the base of a low hill, which one of the party climbed, in search rather of information as to their habits, than in hope of a kill. He came back with the report that even a gunshot had failed to break up their ranks, and that they went on their way in perfect order.

The road, still over a wide plain, with occasional undulations, might have been considered barren of interest by those who could not find delight in the wonderful gradations of colouring, dun against the cloudless sky ; the sensation of infinite space ; the crocuses and minute arums, dainty jewels set in golden sands ; the darting lizards, distinguishable only in motion from their surroundings ; the tiny white shells of the land-

snails; the scent of the wormwood *artemisiium* when crushed beneath our horses' feet; the myriads of larks, including the exquisite crested lark—the Mary-lark of the Highlands of Scotland; while now and then a deep purple shadow crossing our path told of a griffon-vulture or lanner-falcon swooping over the plain, to the terror of bird and beast.

From time to time the Professor would break out into song, not the irritating snatches which are an insult alike to silence and to conversation, but a consistent and complete rendering, as careful as if in any drawing - room, of some quaint old folk - song picked up in his many wanderings—and which, sung with an artistic verve in a mellow tenor, others uniting in bass or alto in a harmonised refrain, filled the air with a melody not unworthy of the surrounding silence.

Suddenly we were startled by a sound so unwonted, yet so strangely familiar, that we could hardly believe in its reality—the shriek of the railway whistle! We were again nearing the Haj railway, at a point where it is actually in use, for 300 kilometres, out of the 2000 projected, are already complete. A little farther and we came across quite a village of the tents

of the workmen, the engineers and foremen being mainly German. The Turkish flag was floating, and Turkish soldiers were in charge, for the protection of the undertaking, which seems to be regarded by the Bedu rather with a sad apprehension than with active opposition. Dr Schumacher relates that, when surveying for the English upon the line afterwards abandoned, he discussed the matter with the friendly shech of the 'Anazeh—a superior tribe, said to number 300,000—who is the official protector of the Haj road. Shech Muhammed realised that the presence of the iron monster must rob him of much grazing ground; but he resigned himself, in Moslem fashion, to the inevitable.

“I see well that with the great iron road we cannot remain long in Haurân; but we know that this country is not for ever to be ours, for we have heard how the descendants of those whose bones lie under the ruins of this land are to come back, and rebuild once more its cities, even as they were in the times of their forefathers”; adding, after a pause: “But we will retire to the 'Ajlûn [the district farther north], where there is place yet enough for our tribe. *Allah yebârik!*” (“May Allah’s blessing be upon it!”). The Bedu hold the tradition that

the *frenjy* (Franks) originally possessed the country, and will one day return; that all over the land are indications, marked upon stones, of treasure to be recovered; and that the visits of archæologists are for the purpose of so changing these marks as to confuse the Arabs, who are beginning to understand them too; for have they not their museums in Constantinople and Jerusalem, and are they not making investigations and excavations of their own?

We crossed the railway, a point where it had reached 200 kilometres south of Damascus, and very soon afterwards began to feel that we were once more in the world of man, however remote may have been the date of his occupation. Caves and grottoes in the hillside showed traces of adaptation to his needs; hewn stones lay about in piles; what looked like the remains of a cenotaph attracted our attention; and we dismounted to examine a group of sarcophagi—some but lately exposed to view, others which had long lain upon the surface. Most had a resting-place for the head and a groove for the lid.

A sudden turning at the ford of a rapid stream revealed the town of Ammân, lying in a narrow valley between low but precipitous hills. Most

of us were utterly unprepared, after six hours of riding across a lonely tableland, to find an orderly town of 10,000 inhabitants, of an aspect so superior to anything we had seen since leaving Jerusalem, or even, so far as the actual town is concerned, to Jerusalem itself, that an explanation seemed necessary, and the statement that the population was Circassian was, geographically, an added perplexity. The houses, built partly of mud brick and partly of ancient material like those of Madaba, were well placed, most had porticos and balconies, and some were enclosed with well-swept yards. It was not immediately that we realised to the full the causes of a certain sense of unfamiliarity, of having passed into another country, with other conditions. The ear was, perhaps, the first sense conscious of change. The town was *silent*. There was none of the shrieking, none of the high-pitched voices, none of the singing of an Arab entourage—not only because we were among Circassians, but also because we were in a place where not a woman, not even a young girl, was to be seen! There were men in plenty, silently stalking about, like shabby ghosts of the Prince Regent, in tight-waisted coats, high vests, a display of silver buttons and braid, full skirts,

and high boots. Instead of the dangling sword proper to the rest of their historic effect, all carried a revolver at the side, as well as a long dagger upright in the girdle. All were armed, and a row of cartridges across the breast was as much *de rigueur* as the low astrachan cap which completed the costume. There were no cafés; no dice-boards at street corners; no lounging, screaming, idling; no "making kafe"—the Arabic phrase for doing nothing, in company with others similarly employed, and a row of water-pipes.

These Circassians have an interesting history. In spite of all that is said of "the unspeakable Turk," perhaps few rulers have so many varieties of voluntary immigrants within their domains. The Circassians of East Jordanland seem to have first left their home in the Caucasus, Kamnimotsk, or Kakupschi, about the year 1860, and to have wandered in search of a home where they might be privileged to live under Moslem rule. Their leader, the Emir Nūh Bey, a major in the Russian army, conducted them first into Asia Minor, and finally, after many difficulties and disappointments, about 1878, to this district, which they call "the edge of the desert"—possibly with some personal intention on the part

of their leader, who, as his son, 'Abd el hamīd Bey, informed Dr Schumacher, was descended from a family named Hûsh or Hûshi, who came originally from Ramleh (by some identified with Arimathea) in the plain of Sharon, and fought against the Crusaders. Their crest, which they bear upon their weapons, and which, in the Caucasus, they branded upon their cattle, was a mace. The same, with the addition of the letters *alef* within the head of the mace, was also branded upon their slaves. These Hûshi travelled from Jerusalem into Anatolia, and thence into the Caucasus, and now, as it would seem, were, after the lapse of centuries, on the way back to the cradle of their race. They arrived in the Jaulân, the district which, with the Belka, they have since colonised, about 1880, and in less than a quarter of a century have changed the face of the district which they inhabit. They are frugal and industrious, and have some knowledge of agriculture. Unfortunately, their industry has, in one respect, been misdirected, and they are the acknowledged purveyors of tree trunks for roofing and other architectural purposes, which they convey all over the district in two-wheeled carts drawn by a team of oxen. As the wheels are guiltless of

grease, as roads, as we understand them, are practically unknown, and the loads heavy, the approach of these vehicles is known half-a-mile in advance. The melancholy result of their timber trade is that the surrounding hillsides have, within the last twenty years, been almost denuded of their oaks and pines. It is some slight mitigation, however, that the Circassians plant as well as destroy, and promising fruit gardens follow the banks of the stream, especially at Jerash, but also at Ammân and elsewhere.

In many respects they are very different from the Arabs: in their industry, their settled homes, their power of initiation, their habits. They have superior agricultural instruments; they do not look upon the camel and the ass as the sole possible means of transportation; but, alone in Syria, until the recent establishment of Jewish and German colonies, employ carts, those for lighter purposes being made of wattles. They preserve their national dress, and neither the tarbush of the Arab of the towns, nor the aba or mantle, common to all, have ever been adopted. Many speak Turkish fluently, the elder ones some Russian, most a little Arabic with a bad accent, but their ordinary tongue continues to be Circassian. The Turkish

Government has permitted them to repopulate various ruinous towns—Nawa, Ammân, Jerash, and various villages—for a given period, without paying any taxes, and, in spite of certain incidents of attack and reprisal between themselves and the Bedu, fierce enough for the time, they have succeeded in inspiring their neighbours with respect or, perhaps, awe. They themselves, it is said, are perfectly fearless in attack or defence, and extremely severe in exaction of vengeance. Whereas the fellahin fear to attract attention by successful crops of fruit or grain, lest they should be called upon to feed the Bedu and the tax-gatherer, the Circassians fear no one, and at present pay no taxes. Hence, as well as from superior capacity and industry, they effect, as no fellah may venture to do, improvements of a kind which are permanent; they make walls and roads, they devise systems of irrigation, they plant hedges and trees.

In Ammân, as we came to know later, their industry had very unfortunate effects upon the glorious ruins which adorn the hills on either side: the basilica has wholly disappeared, and one apse of the thermæ; but the Muchtar, who may, perhaps, be likened to the mayor of the town, has forbidden further depredations,

and, happily, the new population has not chosen to establish itself among the ruins.

We had made no arrangements for our accommodation in Ammân—a visit which had not been included in the original programme. However, we had been assured there was a “locanda”—it is curious how many Italian words have been accepted into Arabic—and as we had not yet lunched we made our way thither without loss of time. It was in the hands of Christians, and, from the point of view of domestic arrangements, Christianity is not a success among Arabs; and, without entering into details, it suffices to say that life can now hold no mysteries for us in the matter of inns, nor, it may be added, of domestic entomology.

Its full horrors were not revealed until we went inside, and, in our circumstances, to go indoors while we could remain without would have shown a singular lack of imagination and of the spirit of psychological inquiry. There were two courts, an inner and an outer, and those who had investigated certain obvious details decided at once upon the outer, and, accordingly, chairs were arranged round a deal table under a vast apricot-tree—our eight horses, with several other horses and donkeys, being

under a neighbouring apricot-tree. We then collected our saddle-bags, and spread our luncheon, after which we drank coffee for the good of the house.

By-and-by a very smart young officer, speaking French and German—educated at a military academy in Austria—came to call upon the Professor, and again we all had coffee. He came as the representative of the officials of the railway line. We were interested in the fact that, unlike most other Arabs of our acquaintance, he did not smoke, and said that he came of a family of non-smokers.

His visit finished, we went off to see the ruins, which lie on the hills on either side of a stream, which we crossed on stepping-stones, though it is said to be not fordable, even on horseback, in the winter. Burckhardt, who was here in 1810, speaks of the elaborate arrangements made for the benefit of this water-supply, a rare natural gift in the Belka. Not only the banks, but the bed of the river was paved, in the manner we had seen ourselves at Ba'albek and elsewhere; and the water was full of fish, probably the chub, which still exist here, and in the Jabbok and Arnon, though ignored by the Arabs, who do not care for fish, and who when

they do kill them, with a view of selling them to Europeans, pursue the wasteful and unsportsmanlike method of a discharge of gunpowder!

The most impressive of the ruins, perhaps because the least interfered with by modern buildings, is the theatre. The stage has been destroyed, but some forty tiers of seats still remain visible, as well as about twenty-four boxes, each capable of holding a dozen persons—traces in all of places for some 3000 spectators. Voices on the stage are still distinctly heard on the farthest tier, although the acoustic properties have probably suffered from the removal of parts of the building. A fine colonnade, of which several Corinthian columns, 15 feet high, still remain, stood in front of the building, leading to the river on the one hand and to a small odeum on the other. Burckhardt was at a loss to conjecture the nature of the latter building, of which much more existed then than now: the roof had fallen in, and made entrance difficult, but the wall of the semicircular area was, he says, richly decorated. The theatre is built into the side of the hill in such a way that the third tier of boxes is excavated in the solid rock.

On the opposite side the ruins are more

numerous, but less impressive. A mosque, said to be of the time of the Abbasides (eighth century), stands almost side by side with a Byzantine church; and a little to the north-east are the remains of thermæ, which received water by means of a conduit from the river. A street of columns on the left bank of the stream, and parallel with it, indicates the direction of the high street of the town, nearly a thousand yards long; while north of this stood a forum (by some thought to be a temple) of a late Roman date. The town was evidently walled, and the street of columns was closed by gates towards the east. We heard of many tombs, sarcophagi, and remains of dwellings worth seeing behind the town, but we had little enough time to look at even what was of primary interest. We were, however, thanks to Circassian civilisation, more fortunate than Burckhardt, whose guides forsook him, alarmed by the sight of fresh horse-dung near the ruins, and fearful of falling into the hands of the Bedu. When reproached, they replied that they did not see why they should expose themselves to the danger of being stripped and robbed of their horses, because of his foolish caprice of writing down the stones!

Burckhardt was not the first visitor. He had been preceded by Seetzen in 1805-6, who, however, left very little record of his travels in Haurân and the Belka.

It was necessary to cut short our investigations while enough daylight remained to allow the Professor to pay a visit to the muchtar—a visit worth recording on account of the extreme contrast between our experience here and everywhere else upon our journey. While we were seeking for his house he seems to have had intimation of our approach, for he received us in the road, and, although he once uttered a half-hearted *tfaddalu*, an invitation to enter which we did not accept, contrary to all Oriental custom and tradition, he showed no desire whatever to entertain us. Elsewhere, to turn away without coffee, repose, and cigarettes would have been a mutual insult. He was civil enough, but of the typical Circassian moroseness, and his small, meaningless features, which, despite its reputation for beauty, were characteristic of the race, never once lighted up with even a passing gleam of sunshine.

It was dark under our apricot trees, when we regained the courtyard of the inn, and while we waited for supper we watched with interest

the scene around us, again struck by the contrast with our accustomed Arab surroundings. Where there are Arabs there are all the elements of a comic opera: the bright colour, the laughter, the ever-changing groups, the perpetual singing—not individual egotistic singing, but chorus, harmony, antiphon, with hand-clappings and merry shouts. There are sudden, and, apparently, inconsequent dances, and equally sudden and inconsequent changes of mood, drawing of knives, quarrels, embraces, and hand-shakings, such as exist nowhere but among Arabs, and on the lyric stage. Here, however, it was no comic opera, but a transpontine drama of the good old-fashioned sort—a novel by “Monk” Lewis, or Thomas Love Peacock. Men in long, dark drapery glided in and out by the imperfect light of the single lantern hung beneath the trees; they pulled their caps low on their foreheads, and veiled their faces with a cloak thrown over the left shoulder; all carried arms, and seldom spoke, and then only in low voices; the few Arabs present were of the upper class, officers mainly, and they seemed affected by the general depression, and drank coffee and smoked their water-pipes in silence. A single interruption served but to

accentuate the prevailing mood. A drunken man, a very rare spectacle in a Moslem country—a Christian, of course—had reached the voluble and affectionate stage, and assured us all, in a variety of languages, of his perfect readiness to oblige us in any direction. The audience silently ignored his existence, and it was in vain that our host led him again and again to the gate: our polyglot friend invariably took affectionate leave, and promptly returned. We felt persuaded that the audience considered his conduct merely another form of the Christian eccentricity, of which our presence had already supplied a curious example. We were all crazy Franks—some drank wine, and others “wrote down stones.” Relief came at last, in the person of the only woman we caught sight of in Ammân, a stout Italian of determined aspect, who withdrew her lord and master, not without a certain amount of discussion, which must have further enlightened our companions as to the manners and customs of the superior races. In spite of his irregularities the wretched creature was not friendless. He was a wandering contractor and builder, and possessed, we were told, of some fifteen helpmates dispersed over various parts of the country! Even our own

mukaris were silent for once: Khalil slept over his water-pipe, and the boy was at his usual evening task of patching the cloths which hung beneath the horses to protect them from the flies, and which they generally kicked into rags in the course of the day. The beasts themselves seemed asleep after their meal—the only one, according to Arab custom, in the twenty-four hours. Dogs and chickens stirred now and then in dark corners, and cats crept about with a fitting air of silence and mystery.

Presently our supper arrived: good bread, good soup, good rice—one may always count on good cooking among Arabs in this country—and a fowl good to eat, although, to the eye, too much *au naturel*, too suggestive of a boiled corpse with wagging head, and legs so much in their normal position as to be somewhat surprising upon the dinner-table. Our host offered us beer, and arrived with bottles and glasses in hand, well knowing that at the end of a long, hot day, and in our present surroundings with, the dust and smell of a stable, a couple of bottles cooled in running water, even at the price of a franc and a half each, might be hard to resist; but even the Sportsmen nobly looked the other way, in the probably futile hope of a

classification apart from our fellow-Europeans, who could be still heard carrying on a polyglot exchange of compliments at the farther end of the village. We solaced ourselves with tea, and retired early, in the expectation, entirely unfulfilled, of a long night's rest.

CHAPTER VI

JERASH, AND THE FORDS OF JABBOK

“Once more to distant ages of the world
Let us revert, and place before our thoughts
The face which rural solitude might wear
To the unenlightened swains of pagan Greece.”

WORDSWORTH

THERE was no lingering in Ammân next morning. From sheer habit of historic reference we speculated as to whether it were Ptolemy Philadelphus who, having rebuilt the ancient city of Rabbath Ammân, and bequeathed to it the name of Philadelphia, still used among the Arabs, may have endowed it, moreover, so far as our *locanda* was concerned, with one of the most offensive of the ten plagues of his native land, after which we did our best to forget our recent experiences. We may remark in passing, however, that traces, painful traces, lingered till later in the day, when they were finally removed by a dip in the strong current of the Jabbok, for it had been in very mournful Gregorian cadence that some of us had chanted “Moab is my wash-pot” while a little water was poured on to our hands out of a bottle by way of morning ablution.

However, it was a privilege worth paying for to be able to sing the Psalms in Moab under any conditions; and whatever else may have failed the party, it was never the spirit of cheerful resignation.

We have not yet sung the praise of the early start! One must come to the East to learn to the full the beauty of the morning and of the night, as well as, *inter alia*, of life without fogs and coal fires and bad cooking; of life where houses are spacious and servants serve, and a napoleon goes further than a sovereign, and the post comes but once a week or so, and newspapers are not.

There is here none of the discomfort of the early start at home—no shivering over ice-cold water, no closed shutters, no bolted front door, no makeshift breakfast brought by the wrong servant in incomplete toilet. No matter how early you rise the world is up before you; you can have as much at five o'clock as at nine. Your horse is a little stable stiff; but he is as pleased with the early start as you, and he snuffs the dewy air with æsthetic enjoyment. In the hollows of the mountains a mist wreath is lying; here and there a few clouds even may hang low to the west—but you know they are

only dew, and that even now in October we are perfectly certain of a fine day, with at least another thirty to follow. You are invigorated, encouraged in mind and body for the whole day, even when, as in our case, you know that the day will last for ten or twelve hours.

Almost immediately on leaving the village we began to climb—for, although Ammân is 2747 feet above sea-level, the town itself is in a hollow—and soon found ourselves on an excellent Roman road. The particular pleasure which the Professor had promised us for this day's journey was that we should do homage at the tomb of Abdel Azziz en-Nimr Shech Adwân, more often spoken of as Nimr, a great poet, of the Bedu tribe of the Adwân, who addressed a great number of poems to Watka, his twenty-fourth wife. We had heard one of his poems recited by our Bedawy escort, and we were willing to take the Professor's word for the rest; for the poet's works have been collected by but one editor, who has not yet published them, and the two or three writers who mention the spot at all do so mainly in connection with a certain Shech Goblan, who, before Jerash and Ammân were given over to the Circassians, was much feared throughout the district.

About two hours after leaving Ammân we reached the Wady el-Hammam, and, a little later, Yajûz, a large Bedu cemetery on the side of a hill, strewn with columns, capitals, and hewn stones, obviously the remains of a Roman town. Some great stone troughs, which may have been sarcophagi, attracted the attention of our horses on account of the water they contained, and we gladly dismounted, and left them to such refreshment as was provided by the very muddy spring, while we climbed the hill a short distance to the tomb of our laureate, who may certainly be regarded as having an experimental knowledge of what characteristics were most acceptable in a wife, and whose eulogy of Watka should at least have the merit of discrimination.

The whole hillside was covered with graves, and some curious combinations presented themselves. There the tomb of some landowner was marked by a plough, the inconceivably primitive instrument with which the fellah scratches the surface of the fertile soil ; there a fragment of the blue cotton, which is the inevitable dress of the Bedu, twisted round a stick, shows where some woman has been laid to rest ; farther again, a stone, roughly sculptured with the instruments of coffee-making, celebrates the hospitality of some

unnamed shech ; and, in strange contrast with the savagery of to-day, we step over a sculptured capital or carven pillar, memorial of the art and culture of nigh two thousand years ago ; while, reminder that “ extremes meet,” our thoughts are carried back yet another thousand years at sight of the welys—tombs of Moslem saints—standing apart on mounds, shadowed with ancient oaks, where the pious come to worship to-day, to the Israelites who did so of old time, “ upon every high hill and under every green tree.”

Around the spring were groups of women, with the tattooed faces, hanging veils, and curious long, narrow dresses of the East Jordan Bedu, barely wide enough to stride in, but lying at least a yard upon the ground, front and back, so that when they walk the skirt has to be kilted, often to the entire violation of such ideas of modesty as may have originally dictated its design. They had taken much interest in the Lady, and, as usual, had speculated as to which of her companions might be her proprietor—always the first point to ascertain—the remaining matters of curiosity in regard to a woman being : What did she cost ? and How many boys has she ?—after which they frankly discuss her “ points,” and express surprise at the smallness of her waist.

Suddenly there was an instant's silence ; all eyes were turned southward, where a procession had just come into sight winding up the valley. A weird, melancholy song broke out, the women pressed forward, and we realised that a funeral was advancing. We had already observed a newly-made grave ; but the procession passed it by, and halted beside the nearest wely, under a group of trees. The four men who carried the bier laid it gently down, and the women, with loud cries, gathered about it on the ground. The body was that of a woman, so closely wrapped in her dress and veil that we could only perceive that she was slender. All joined in the loud wailing, led, apparently, by a professional mourner, who sat beside the corpse, beating her breast, and throwing dust upon her head. It was a pathetic evidence of the homogeneousness of human-kind, despite differences of custom, that those who really wept, silently and apart, were, we understood, the mother and mother-in-law of the dead, while a young man who leant alone against a tree trunk was the newly-married husband of a three days' bride. She had died, they said, of a sudden illness, the description of which suggested measles or small-pox. We could not but think of the little home made desolate, of

plans and hopes never to be realised, of the bereaved husband—for here, among the Bedu, marriage is a matter of choice and not of compulsion, as among the Arabs of the towns—of the poor girl herself, who, having reached what is the main object of existence among the Orientals, had been called away just as life was opening. Our point of view may have been a little too Occidental, or it may have been another case of “extremes meet,” the mean being represented by the higher civilisation of Khalil, a true Jerusalemite, for his one remark was: “It was a pity the bridegroom had had no use out of his bargain when he had paid so much for her!”

The young man was presented to the Professor, who expressed our respectful sympathy, and we turned away after a last glance at the loud-wailing group of the indifferent, the silent sadness of those most concerned. Whatever the age or race, “Light sorrows speak, great grief is dumb.”

When we left the wady we climbed a precipitous hill, and found ourselves overlooking a deep gorge to our left—the Wady er-Rumman—where abundant verdure showed the presence of water—a rare sight to our eyes, habituated to the aridity of Jerusalem, where running water

is so utterly unknown that if for a few hours once a year, after exceptionally heavy rain, it is reported that the Kedron flows, the whole population turns out to witness so extraordinary a phenomenon. As a matter of fact, moreover, the Kedron does not flow, unless far underground, and only a spring—the well of Job or Joab—overflows into the Kedron bed, but the fact is always thus described. Further, we crossed a small tributary stream, where we found a number of shepherds and herdsmen, with camels and sheep and goats. By this time our horses were hot with the climb, and we were forced to deny them the desired refreshment, and hastened on, already somewhat occupied with thoughts of the luncheon promised to us at the fords of Jabbok. When we came—some of us riding in advance with the officer—to a pleasant stream shaded by oleanders we thought he must be mistaken in riding resolutely forward, for we were not yet used to a district in which two streams might be passed in a single day, and were half inclined to wait for those behind. However, we pressed on, and, as no shouts followed us, were glad to have made so much way that it was possible to dismount and rest our horses for a few moments, for the

Jabbok, it appeared, was still distant — “over two hills,” declared Khalil, when he at last overtook us. They were somewhat stiff hills both to climb and to descend, and not Jacob himself, with his two wives and two women-servants and eleven sons, and all his other anxieties, could have been more glad than we, when, from our last ascent, we saw beneath us a wide expanse of fresh green, showing that we had reached the fords of Jabbok. The river, rising from streams in the hills above Ammân, and sweeping round by the north-west before taking a sudden turn towards the Jordan, accomplishes a journey of sixty miles, not counting its windings, to reach the point which, at starting, was only eighteen miles away. In its descent of some three thousand feet its current gains great swiftness, and it rushes with considerable violence over its rocky bed, as the widely-scattered pebbles — white and water-worn — abundantly testify. Two roads follow its course; and though but a couple of distant villages were in sight, the cultivated land all along its banks showed the near presence of active humanity: a deserted mill among the bushes, and a few fellahin watering their cattle, were, however, our only reminder of human life. We were

free to picture any chapter in its history which might strike our imagination—Jacob, occupied with all his family cares and apprehensions, suddenly called upon in the darkness to remember the world of the Unseen; Gideon pursuing the Midianites; the hosts of Chosroes marching from Damascus to the Nile; the Roman legionaries constructing the very road which we have followed to-day; Galilean pilgrims coming up to the Jerusalem feasts by way of Peræa; the propagandists of the Prophet hastening to the north; and lastly, and more enduring than all, the fellahin, with their elementary agriculture, seeking their daily bread like the swallows that are darting overhead or the rat that splashes into the stream, oblivious and indifferent to all other life, and, therefore, permanent and persistent in their own.

For ourselves, however, the fords of Jabbok represented primarily the means of taking a bath, and secondarily, those of making tea. The sun was still hot; we had descended considerably since leaving Ammân, and the bushes offered welcome shade. The Circassian soldier brought the Lady a handful of ripe blackberries—the first we had seen in Syria, where blackberries are abundant enough, but for lack of moisture never

seem to ripen. The oleanders, with their rich crimson ; the rare feast of abundant verdure ; the grey water rushing upon its white bed, with the effect of blue which gives to the Jabbok its modern name of Ez-Zerka—"the Blue" ; the contented horses cooling their limbs in a deep pool, made a vision we were loth to disturb ; but we were already late, and after an hour's repose were bidden to mount once more. When we had crossed the rushing ford and regained the plateau we realised that our shadows were already lengthening.

We had now crossed an important political boundary, for the Jabbok is one of the three rivers at right angles with the Jordan — the Arnon, Jabbok, and Yarmuk — which divide Eastern Palestine into three provinces ; physically, as well as, for the most part, politically, though their disentanglement is difficult, distinct. Behind us was the Belka, the land of Ammon and Moab, practically the Peræa of ancient history, in the time of the Herods politically associated with Galilee, and always regarded by the Jew as being as much a Jewish province as Judæa or Galilee. The climate of the Belka is temperate, and in spite of insufficient water at its highest points the treeless plateau is ever

fresh and breezy, providing pasture for innumerable herds. It is but seventy miles from the orange gardens of the Philistine plain, but eight hours' direct ride from the palms of Jericho, and yet the Arabs have a proverb: "They said to the Cold: 'Where shall we find thee?' And he answered: 'In the Belka.' 'And if not there?' 'In Baalbek is my home.'" Now Baalbek, as we saw it in August, lies under the shadow of snowcapped mountains.

Now we were coming into 'Ajlûn, the land of Gilead, "the region of Decapolis," a district of forests—falling, alas! before the axe of the Circassian—of springs and streams, tributaries of the Jordan as well as of the Jabbok and the Yarmuk; the land whence "a company of Ishmaelites came with their camels, bearing spicery and balm and myrrh, going to carry it down to Egypt." There is still "balm in Gilead." We had scarcely crossed the river when our soldier, stooping from his saddle, snatched a handful of deliciously fragrant herbs, which he presented to the Lady, who had no opportunity of verifying their species, but was quite prepared to believe that she had enjoyed the sweetness of the *balsamum Gileadense*, though with suppressed misgivings that it might be

only the *melissa officinalis*. Indeed, the low growth of *artemisia* and other herbs throughout this region is so sweet that, in the wilder parts of the Belka frequented by gazelle, which feed upon it, the Arabs constantly pick up their droppings for the pleasure of the fragrance.

Low ranges of hills to the east lay between us and that far-away fascination of the desert of which we had first, and most fully, realised the spell at Mshatta, making us feel that we were, in some degree, coming once more into touch with humanity and the commonplace of life, and farther away from that dim region known to so few, and which throughout history has always been the great source of danger, the check upon the civilisation of East Jordan, ever open to the great hungry desert, whence in all ages wild tribes have come forth to seek sustenance from the fertile tablelands of Bashan, Gilead, and Moab.

Here not Nature and the desert but Art and Greece were the prominent facts in the minds of some among us. Ammân, fresh in our memory, had been already an important stronghold two hundred years before Christ, and, later, a member of the Decapolis, although, alone of the ten cities, lying south of the Jabbok.

Here, as never before, were we able to realise something of the nature and meaning of that mysterious alliance of the Decapolis, of which the origin is unknown, but which we had seen represented in miniature in the present-day policy of playing off the Circassians against the Bedawy tribes of that same district, which, even two thousand years ago, was then, as now, the check upon all prosperity and progress. There seems little doubt that this confederacy—like the Arab dynasty of the Ghassanides at a later date under Trajan—was intended to balance these Semitic influences; and these cities were thoroughly Hellenic, not only in art and culture, but, unlike other parts of Eastern Palestine, in religion also, the cult of Astarte alone being borrowed from their surroundings. Most of them were placed, like Ammân, on either side of a stream, with fertile land all round about, not on a hill, as was the Semitic custom, to judge from the positions of most of the villages one sees west of the Jordan. Their pastimes, too, were Greek—the theatres, the bath, the circus. All had the street of columns, the forum, the temples such as we had seen at Ammân; each was approached by just such a road as we were treading now.

While we talked and mused the sun had set, the short evening glow was in the west, and we were soon cautiously walking our horses in the dim twilight. Suddenly a stately arch reared itself against the fading sky ; while beyond, far as the eye could reach, dusky columns arose against the background of the dark hillside. Before we could take in the scene the veil of night had fallen, for here in the East "with one stride comes the dark." We could see no longer ; but we knew we were descending into a valley, for the sound of the rushing stream at the bottom seemed to get nearer, till at last we felt that our horses' feet were in the water. The village was asleep, but few lights shone from the windows of the frugal Circassian inhabitants, and we could only trust to our kindly animals, who were taking their lead from that of the officer, who rode in advance. We were ascending a very steep hill ; soon we had reached level ground, and we awaited the coming of the responsible members of our party. Looking back we could see the great lordly columns standing out snow-white in the starlight, monuments of a race, an age, a system, a religion that had perished like last year's snow, leaving not a link with to-day, except that common

aspiration after happiness, present and future, which had inspired the existence of the Past, as it still inspires those who gaze upon its monuments. Never had the Past seemed to stoop towards us as now in this eastern starlight, and it seemed as if we might almost hope for answer when we asked :

“Gods of Hellas, gods of Hellas,
Can ye listen in your silence,
Can your mystic voices tell us
Where ye hide?”

Surely somewhere in the Past there must be a voice ; the intense Life which had created yonder city could not be wholly dead ; all that was beautiful and true must somewhere, somehow, be living still ! We were roused from our meditations by the cheery voice of the Professor calling out of the darkness to know whether any were missing among us. We were close by the house of the mudir, and could even see the guards and servants assembled in the lighted portico. It was an anxious moment, for it depended upon the nature of his reception whether we had hospitable entertainment or were cast adrift upon the resources of the village, as had been the case last night in Ammân. We rallied our forces, dismounted from our

horses, and presented ourselves and our credentials.

We were very thankful when the door was at once unlocked, and we were admitted into the guest-room, a large apartment, with a high divan running its entire length provided with cushions, a few chairs, a round table in one corner, and on the deep window- ledges great piles of very official-looking papers. We were too tired to criticise our accommodation, which was, at all events, infinitely superior to that of the night before, and thankfully seated ourselves. Meantime the news of the Professor's arrival had evidently reached the mudir himself, for in a few minutes the scene was changed : three or four servants appeared, the floor was spread with two magnificent carpets, either of which would have been the pride of any London drawing-room, additional lights and some extra chairs were brought in, and nothing was needed but a duster, which, however, did not appear. The Lady surreptitiously cleaned the table, the carpets having stirred the æstheticism which our Ammân experiences had put to sleep, and we deposited our head-gear. The men removed their shoes, and placed themselves on the high divan ; the Lady, unable to emulate so lofty an

example, seized some cushions, and established herself upon the floor, secure of violating no Oriental etiquette, and, by the Professor's direction, covered her head with her keffeye, which was, he said, more distinguished under the circumstances.

Next the mudir himself appeared—'Abd el-hamid Bey, son of Nūh Bey, already mentioned—a fine-looking man in European dress, who shook hands cordially with all the party, and assured us of our welcome, and coffee was at once served. To say that it was coffee with hêhl conveys nothing to the Occidental understanding, and mere words fail to express all that hêhl can add to a cup of coffee. It is nectar and ambrosia brewed in Olympus; it is a taste and a perfume, a stimulus and a sedative. For centuries we have been drinking coffee—unimaginative Occidentals that we are!—and nobody has taught us the virtues of hêhl. It is only a bean, portable, one would suppose, conceivably an article of commerce, or which might be cultivated or otherwise introduced, although how, on second thoughts, it would combine with the beverage we profanely call "coffee" is another matter. Coffee worth the drinking must be roasted, crushed (in Heaven's name not ground!), and

made while you wait, not brought in paper bags from the grocer, and kept for weeks. It is brought to the door of the room in the brass pot in which it was made, and poured out tenderly as a butler pours out a perfumed wine, leaving space at the top of the cup, small as it is, for the aroma.

After coffee we entered into conversation—that is to say, the Professor did—with the mudir, the Arabic-speaking Sportsman being occasionally called in when their Arabic vocabulary ran short ; for to both it was a foreign language, the mudir, as has already been seen, being a Circassian. He remembered the names of the few savants and other travellers who had passed that way, and inquired after all, asked particulars as to our journey and as to the personality of each, exhibited some polite surprise at the presence of the Lady in these distant regions, and still more that she was not the property of any of her fellow-travellers. He showed great concern as to her comfort, sent for additional cushions, and several times personally addressed her. He is known as a man of exceptional intelligence and breadth of mind, and of a friendly and amiable disposition, in striking contrast to the average Circassian, who is said to

be treacherous and morose. He is quite an important person, having at his command from ten to fifteen mounted *gens-d'armes*, and when he goes eastward among the neighbouring tribe of the Beni Hasan for the collection of taxes is accompanied by as many regular soldiers, with their officer. He settles small differences and disputes, and, says Dr Schumacher, carries a few bullet-holes in his coat as token of his office of peacemaker. More serious cases are taken by both Bedu and fellahin before the Mutesarrif (Governor) of Haurân.

While conversation proceeded we could hear most welcome sounds without—chopping, frying, beating of eggs; and, after a second edition of coffee, two servants entered, carrying a large cotton drugget, which was spread over the carpet, and upon which was set the Şanīye, a large round tray, placed upon an X-shaped stand, which raised it several inches from the ground. We all seated ourselves on the floor, as well as our host and another guest, a very intelligent man, and a great talker, but less adapted than the mudir to polite society.

Each guest had a large slice of excellent wholemeal bread, and each had a spoon and a towel. There were two dishes of meat, with

vegetables, two of rice, two of fried eggs, and two basins of pomegranate juice, exquisite in colour and delicious to the taste. Everything was very good, well cooked, and neatly served. It was etiquette to help yourself to any dish, and in any rotation you fancied, putting in your spoon, and conveying the food direct to your mouth—a custom which had its drawbacks, as the Lady found when she fixed her affections on pomegranate juice, and found it becoming gradually impregnated with onions, as her neighbour, the Bey, our fellow-guest, was alternating it with mouthfuls of stewed mutton. The hospitable mudir constantly pressed us to eat, inquiring, when the Lady's appetite failed, whether there were anything else she would prefer. Finally we all adjourned to the doorstep to have water poured upon our hands. Then followed more coffee, always with *hêhl*, cigarettes, and, after half-an-hour, the samovar. If the coffee had been worthy of the Bedu the tea was worthy of Russia. We drank it, of course, in tumblers, with crystallised sugar and floating slices of lemon, and we stirred it with spoons of heavy silver, beautifully chased and enamelled.

Then came more conversation, mainly political, and it was very interesting to hear the mudir's

emphatic repudiation of prejudice, national or religious, especially since the Circassians are accused of fanaticism and of hatred of Europeans. "It was all one to him," he averred—"Moslems, Jews, Nazarenes!" Two or three servants stood by the whole time, and one could not but contrast the perfection and apparent readiness of their service with that of the superior domestics at home. They perceived your needs before you could find them out yourself, and tea, or bread, or sugar, or a match, as the case might be, was ready to your use before you were aware that you needed it. Bread or sugar was brought in the fingers, it is true; but knives there were none, and spoons were scarce.

The Lady gave the signal for retirement by frankly falling asleep among her cushions. Retirement, as a matter of fact, there was none; but mattresses, pillows, and lehafs (wadded coverlets) were brought in, and laid side by side upon the floor. The Lady's bed, lehaf, and cushions were covered with rich crimson satin. An ornamental sheet of white cotton, with a coloured design, was spread upon the mattress; the silk cushions, as is the cleanly Eastern custom, had an embroidered breadth of cotton down the centre, and the lehaf had a sheet

of fine cotton tacked to it upon the under side. Thus luxuriously accommodated we all slept so comfortably that we were able to think of Ammân next morning as a nightmare of the past. We must, however, acknowledge that during the early part of the night we were occasionally awakened by the conversation outside the door, probably of our escort and the servants; for in this country, where men rise at dawn, sleep odd half-hours anywhere, and at any time in the day, they may or may not go to bed at night if they should happen to find anything more amusing to do. However, when at last the Professor went outside to suggest silence and the extinction of lights, they most obligingly met his views at once.

Next morning we rose about six from our silken couches, and went outside the door in search of towels and a piece of soap, and poured water into each other's hands wherewith to make such ablution as was possible under very public conditions; for, though there was none of the ill-mannered staring and crowding around of the Madaba Christians, the Circassians condescended to a little distant curiosity, and even a couple of women appeared upon an opposite housetop.

We knew that a very long day was before us, and we had hoped to start early, but our host detained us with kindly importunity. When he appeared upon the scene our bedroom had once more become a drawing-room, and we had taken our early cup of coffee. Then followed more coffee, and then the samovar, with bread and excellent goat's-milk cheese; and finally the mudir's son, a fresh, open-faced, young man, appeared, mounted on a beautiful mare, to accompany us across the valley to the ruined city on the western side.

From the terrace outside the mudir's house we had already taken in the general effect—all the more striking and wonderful that the old town has not been defaced by a single modern building, and hence is far more easily reconstructed by the imagination than Madaba, or even Ammân—a fact for which the history of the settlement, rather than any æsthetic perception, accounts. When the followers of the Emir Nūh Bey arrived at Jerash he took possession of the east side of the valley for the use of his immediate family and attendants, reserving the opposite bank for relatives who were to follow. For various reasons—possibly the accounts of discord with the Bedu, possibly

even some diplomacy on the part of the family here—they have not, so far, arrived, and some two hundred immigrants who came in 1895 were passed on southward. There seems to be some difference of opinion as to the extent of the population, Baedeker giving it at three hundred; Schumacher, whose very interesting monograph is the only other available source of information, at between fifteen and sixteen hundred souls, including some score of fellahin, who serve as labourers and ploughmen, and a few Moslem shopkeepers. Here, as in Ammân, we saw not a single woman in the streets.

The ruins are so extensive, and stand out so clear against the hillside, that, with the Professor's help in identifying the buildings, it was easy, from the east side of the valley, to reconstruct in imagination a town which imagination only can picture, so utterly different is it from the banalities and vulgarities of modern utilitarianism.

Owing to the harder qualities of the stone the ruins are better preserved than those at Ammân, have lost less of their original sharpness, and have the freshness so remarkable at Pompeii. And yet an Arabic writer of the thirteenth century, Yakut, describes it even then

“as a great city now a ruin.” In the ninth century it was mentioned with admiration by the earlier writer, Yakubi, although its decline probably began with the expulsion of the Byzantines.

The most striking features of the scene before us are its highest point, the Temple of the Sun ; its most southern point, the triumphal arch leading towards the Roman road to Ammân ; and the great colonnade, of which over a hundred pillars are still standing, running from one end to the other of the city. There are two large theatres, two temples, a great oval forum, four bridges, and at each of the two points at which the main street, with its propylæa, is intersected by side streets, there is a tetrapylon, a rotunda, square on the exterior and once decorated with statues. The town was pear-shaped, and enclosed by walls 3552 metres long, having at least three, probably six or seven, gates.

This is a mere enumeration ; of such a feast of beauty for the lover of form it is almost hopeless to attempt description. As we descended, and took a few points in detail, we realised that, with the amount of time at our disposal, even to catalogue such a scene was

an impossibility. At the utmost we could but note a few of the more obvious features, and we longed for a few days to dispose of.

Crossing the main street with its great colonnade, many of its splendid pillars lying on the ground, overthrown by earthquakes, we pass the ruins of grand propylæa and of a ruined palace, and, climbing an almost perpendicular ascent, reach the great Temple of the Sun, enclosed by a colonnade, with a portico approached by steps, consisting of three rows of immense Corinthian columns, 38 feet high and 6 feet thick, the acanthus leaves of the capitals being of rare perfection of workmanship. Smaller temples have stood around it, and, descending again, turning our horses' heads a little northward, we find a theatre with sixteen tiers of seats, and a proscenium strikingly low, intended, it is said, for gladiatorial combats and exhibitions of wild beasts. This theatre, like the temple, is joined to the main street by a colonnade and tetrapylon, the rotunda of which was once decorated with statues. The forum next attracted us. It is of oval shape, 120 paces in length, and fifty-five of its columns are still standing, all having Ionic capitals. Another temple, smaller than the first, lies near the south

gate. Its massive walls, $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet thick, contain many niches and windows ; the double Corinthian colonnade is scattered far and wide, though the bases are easily traced, and the little that remains testifies to the former grace of the building.

Close beside this is a large theatre facing towards the north, so that the spectators must have had a magnificent background of their familiar public buildings. Twenty-eight tiers of seats are visible, but probably others lie buried in the débris. It is estimated that the acoustic properties of the building must have been excellent, and that at least 5000 spectators could enjoy the spectacle. We observed an arrangement upon the pillars for the hanging of garlands. Beyond the south exit in the town wall is the Triumphal gateway ; according to some the two gateways were alike, forming a splendid vista as one approached the town, each being of triple construction—the central arch 29 feet in height, the total width 82 feet. There are considerable remains of an interesting building, thought by some to be a naumachia, or theatre for the representation of naval battles. That there exists a circus, of which many rows of seats still remain, cannot be doubted ; but recent authorities are of opinion

that the adjoining basin, 230 yards in length by 100 yards in width, into which well-preserved channels lead the water from the brook below, must have served some other purpose.

We could not but regret that the lateness of our start cut short our opportunity for further enjoyment of the scene; but a day of ten or twelve hours was before us, and we soon found ourselves once more upon the Roman road, with our horses turned towards the south.

CHAPTER VII

ES-SALT

“And fade into the light of common day.”

WE knew, when we had lost sight of Jerash, that the romance of our journey was over, although we had still before us three days of the happiness of an open-air life, and of being face to face with Nature in her wilder utterances. We were bound for Es-Salt, across the fertile land of Gilead, and over some of the highest ground east of the Jordan; but we could not but feel that, having looked upon “the giant forms of empires on their way to ruin,” all else must seem commonplace, so far, at least, as it was associated with humanity. The land had relapsed into the hands of a people perhaps even more rudimentary than that from which it had been wrested, or, so far as the city of Es-Salt was concerned, into the worse savagery of a veneer of Europeanism.

We were not sorry to have to retrace, for

some two hours, our steps of last night, and so recover some of the impressions which we had lost in the gathering twilight. We halted, for a short time only, at the fords of Jabbok, after which we followed a steep path for about half-an-hour, and then began to descend into the Wady El-Mastaba, a desolate gorge, shadeless and hot, from whence we were glad to escape again into the open, passing a few huts, which constitute the village of Mastaba, which owes its existence to the spring Ain El-Mastaba. Again another gorge, the Wady Umm Rabi, also with its spring; and a third, and more important wady and spring, with its village of some thirty huts, Er-Rummâna, which yesterday we had seen only in the distance. It is inhabited almost entirely by Turcomans, who, as usual, betray their nationality by the scarlet and orange touches in their dress—an agreeable change from the perpetual blue of the Arab. These nomadic tribes are to the settled Turks as the Bedu to the fixed population of the Arabs. They are fair, of less pronounced features than their Semitic neighbours, and most numerous in the north of Syria. They are occupied partly in agriculture, but more especially in cattle and camel rearing. We

passed some women at a spring, and their manners struck us as having something of Circassian moroseness.

Just beyond the village the horizon widened, and showed, away to the west, the distant Samaritan hills, half way between us and the Mediterranean.

Presently we came to the edge of the tableland, and saw far below us the fertile gorge of Wâdi Salîhi. Here, we had been assured, we should find a beautiful waterfall, 60 feet in height, and embowered in creepers—a phenomenon almost unknown in Palestine. We never saw that waterfall; and we had a secret theory, some of us, that “Someone had blundered,” for we were, moreover, required to descend a precipice calculated to disturb the nerves of even such experienced travellers as we considered ourselves to be. Some traces of a passing donkey were the only argument which—about half way down—seemed to be in favour of a prospect of ever reaching the bottom, which, however, was in course of time safely achieved. We were much impressed by the agility of the baggage animals, which clumsily, rather than heavily, laden, and wisely abandoned by the mukaris, picked their way as skilfully

and daintily as cats, although it would be difficult to say whether the loose shale that crumbled beneath one's feet, or the polished rock, which offered no foothold at all, was the more disconcerting.

Down in the valley we found abundant shade, and the bushes were fresh and green, but the water in the wady was so low and muddy that we were the more convinced that we had entirely missed all traces of the waterfall. The horses, after the recent excitement, were thankful to drink, and we gladly spread our luncheon and made some coffee. In missing our waterfall we had also missed an interesting cromlech, said to be 13 feet in diameter.

About seven hours after leaving Jerash we entered the Wady Er-Rumemin, where we forded a brook which serves to turn two or three mills, and waters the small plain into which the valley finally opens. Here we found the first traces of Christianity since leaving Madaba, always excepting the locanda at Ammân: an orderly village with a Latin and a Greek church, school, and presbytery, well-planted olive grounds and neatly-kept vegetable gardens. We were already late, and dared not stay to examine a group of ruins to the west of

the Latin church, still less others which, we were told, lay at a little distance.

Leaving the village by the right bank of the wady, now called El-Hor, we climbed a steep hill, and found ourselves in a beautiful oak wood.

As over a score of varieties of oaks are found in Palestine they are somewhat difficult to distinguish, but some at least of these were of the species *quercus ægilops*, having acorns with scales, the cups of which may be familiarly described as looking like miniature pineapples. They are used in tanning, and, as they form quite an important article of commerce, the trees are treated with more respect than is usual among the destructive fellahin.

During the winter one meets, coming into Jerusalem, whole caravans laden with great roots of trees, dug up for sale by the peasants of the mountains, and from this, as well as from tradition, we may well suppose that whole districts have been denuded of their forests. We are told, however, by various authorities that woods as we know them, lofty, as well as thick with undergrowth, have never existed here, and that such wood as we were now passing through is of the normal type, the growth open and scattered, and the trees thick rather than

high. The undergrowth seemed to consist largely of dwarf oak and terebinth, and as we progressed farther, and the wood became thicker, of pine and thorn.

With thick foliage on either side, and lofty hills before us, we hardly realised that the sun was setting when it was suddenly night. Our cavalcade closed up together, and those in front were constantly calling back to others to beware of stretching branches or other difficulties of the path. The very horses, with the instinct of self-protection, in a country where other protection does not exist, kept close to each other. Our officer hurried to the front at sound of voices and movement, the mukaris brought up the rear, and the Lady's horse was secured by a rope to that of one of the men. An opening in the trees revealed a camp of charcoal-burners, and as we once more began to ascend we could see the lurid flames of others of the same trade, lighting up the surrounding hilltops, and making the darkness around seem all the more substantial. It was a darkness which might be felt. We knew, from occasional contact with the branches, that we were still in thick woodland, and as we began to climb once more, the path was so narrow and so perpendicular that our horses

could go only in single file. All but the Professor and the Lady dismounted, rather from humanity than for safety, for the animals' sense of direction was better than ours. As usual on occasions of anxiety, no one spoke. Suddenly a shout arose out of the darkness, and the horses halted ; while those on foot pressed on to know the cause, and the Professor, who was in advance, sent back his electric lantern. One of the baggage horses had found his bulk too great for the narrow passage, and the way was blocked by his entanglement. It took some time to set him free and to ascertain that nothing was lost from his various burdens. As we waited in the dense blackness of the wood, the poor animals struggling for foothold on the steep ascent, the smell of the hyænas was almost nauseating, and the cries of troops of jackals, answering each other out of the darkness, lent a weird touch to our surroundings.

Presently the obstacle was removed, and we were able to continue in the direction of our oriflamme—the spark of light which showed that the Professor, with his lantern, had reached a spot where he could safely await our arrival. A fervent *Alhamdul-Illah!* (“God be thanked!”) from one of our mukaris bringing up the rear, showed

that the horses at least were safe ; and in a few minutes the stragglers on foot had joined the group, one at least having special cause for thankfulness, as he had had a very narrow escape from a fall over an unsuspected precipice. To see each other was still impossible, and a startled *wain es-Sitt ?* (Where is the Lady ?") uttered close beside her, almost gave her pleasure, not from any desire to give trouble to her friends, but rather as assurance that she had not already done so, for there had been moments of which some of us hardly yet felt competent to give an account.

The look backward, from the high ground we had reached, was a spectacle not to be forgotten. Three huge fires flamed high against the great dome of night, which, now that we were out in the open, was perceptible in the clear starlight, and no longer the wall of dense blackness which had seemed to press against our very eyeballs. Moreover, behind us, to the north-east, the moon was rising from behind the Jebel Osha, a mountain 3595 feet high, associated with the prophet Hosea, said to have been born and buried here. The Bedu have a wely containing his grave, about 16 feet long, for all the great men of old were giants, and here they annually

sacrifice sheep in his honour. We felt, as we heard the story, that a sacrifice to the rising moon would be less of an anachronism than we were accustomed to suppose, so thankful were we to have some notion of where the next step would lead us.

It seemed as if Es-Salt were extraordinarily remote, and we asked Khalil if we were not near, with a faint hope that a light we could see away down in the valley might represent the windows of the convent upon whose hospitality we counted, and when he replied: "After two hills," we were even inclined to suppose it a *façon de parler*, equivalent to "by-and-by." However, he was right enough, and we had to descend and climb, and again to descend and climb before, below, up the valley to our left, the town became visible. The light we had counted upon, proved to be again that of charcoal-burners, and a most Satanic spectacle it was, for we came near enough to see a group of figures dancing and leaping against the flaming background.

The last descent was somewhat of a pendant, except that it was on open ground and by moonlight, to our perpendicular ascent in the wood, and a row of telegraph posts at the bottom seemed to add insult to our injuries: the affec-

tation of an effort at civilisation which we felt had been better expended in the clearing of a few rocks and the construction of, let us say, some kind of path. Again, most of the party dismounted, and it was interesting to observe how cleverly the animals picked their way, even the laden baggage animals. When now and then they went, for convenience, a little wide of the ultimate point, we noted with interest how they came at a call from the mukaris—each animal having his own name, to which he readily responded. It may be mentioned in passing that, so willing and intelligent were our friendly quadrupeds, that the only whip in the cavalcade was never used during the whole expedition but to reprove the moral obliquities of the Professor's horse, who took long to recover from his jealousy.

It was some consolation, in riding through the long town of Es-Salt, to find that its inhabitants were still up. They were, in fact, celebrating a festive occasion—the engagement, or, perhaps, more correctly, the sale, of the daughter of some prominent townsman. We could learn no particulars of the transaction, but to judge from the extreme gaiety of the groups gathered about a flaming bonfire in an

open space, it would seem to be satisfactory to both parties—meaning, of course, the bridegroom and the nearest male relatives—father, uncle, and brothers—of the bride, for she herself was not likely to be consulted in the matter.

The kindly parish priests of the patriarchate, like those at Madaba, received us with ready hospitality; one of them even vacated his own room for the use of the Lady when it was ascertained that the Sisters of the Rosary, who could more conveniently have accommodated her, had closed their doors for the night.

We had time next morning to make some small acquaintance with Es-Salt. Although it is a town having a large fixed population (10,000, which includes 3000 Christians) we were struck by the anomalous fact that a large number of the people looked like Bedu. The men had the slender build and finer features we had met so universally since crossing the Jordan, and the women had the much-tattooed faces, and even the long, trailing skirts, we had met all over the Belka. Although it is the seat of a *kaimmakâm* (governor), and has a Turkish telegraph office, it seems to be still in spirit, as until recently it was in fact, in opposition to the Government. Burckhardt,

who was here nearly a century ago, speaks warmly of the hospitality of what he calls the "Szaltese," who were then Bedu at heart, and even in dialect. He says their public hospitality may be estimated at about £1000 a year, collected from the people, and adds that were they subject to the Turks more than that would be extorted from them for forced entertainment. They had lately withstood a three months' siege by the Pasha of Damascus. Then, as now, they were engaged in three branches of commerce: the collection and sale for export of sumach leaves, used largely for dyeing purposes; the weaving of carpets from the wool of their own flocks; and above all, the preparation of raisins.

It was quite a useful enlargement of notions to most of us to find that the familiar raisin used in puddings is not, as the grocers spell it, "Sultana," with some vague notion of an Oriental association with the Sultan, but *Saltana*, and that it comes almost entirely from Es-Salt. The fruit used for the purpose is a small grape without seeds. They are spread out as soon as picked, and then turned over and over, with fingers dipped in olive oil until they are all impregnated in every part. They are

then dried on wood ashes,—the wood employed being the oak or terebinth—collected in baskets, and then spread out to dry on a well-trodden earthen floor. Two and a half kilogrammes (a kilogramme is about two pounds and a fifth avoirdupois) cost, on the spot, twelve piasters, or about two shillings, less, in large quantities.

Another article of commerce is a very strong tobacco known as “heesh,” from the Arabic word for the forests where it is cultivated. It burns so badly as to have given rise to a proverb applied to a man or a subject which puts a stop to conversation: “It is heesh tobacco; do not speak!”

A minor industry, the manufacture of rosaries, has originated in the abundance of certain kinds of hard wood.

The situation of Es-Salt is 2740 feet above sea-level; but the town itself lies in so deep a gorge, the mountains rising like a perpendicular wall on either hand, that we asked the padre whether the place were healthy, and he pointed out that the town extended, in fact, along two valleys—the Wady Osha, and a narrower wady, much less airy, and consequently less sanitary, as had been proved again and again in times of epidemic, when cholera and in-

fluenza have lingered and recurred long after they had ceased in the town itself.

The water is good, and very abundant, the town spring being the finest we had seen in the country.

Es-Salt, the seat of a bishopric, was not important till the Crusades. A fine mausoleum, known as Sâra, is said to be of Christian origin; and there are the remains of a church, hewn in the rocks, with many scattered rock tombs. The castle dates only from the thirteenth century, when it was rebuilt after destruction by the Mongols of the ancient fortress, which may have withstood Saladdin.

We were quite sorry to take leave here of our silent Circassian, who had always shown himself kindly and capable, but it seemed that his duty ended at Es-Salt—and, indeed, his services were no longer requisite. We noticed several Europeans in the town, probably merchants bringing raisins for export, or possibly grapes—for we had had some for breakfast of very unusual quality, and what a gardener would call “well grown,” which seldom happens in this country, where the vines are most often not raised from the ground, so that the under side of the bunch, though well ripened by

the warm, dry earth, is flat, and not always well coloured.

Considering the amount of commerce with other places it seemed to us to show an almost insolent—perhaps it was only an ignorant—indifference on the part of the inhabitants that they should make no effort whatever to improve the approach to Es-Salt. We left the town by a track but little better than that by which we had approached it—a track which would have spoilt the business of any decent stone quarry. The immediate exit was over a series of ash-heaps and middens, across which the women were trailing their long skirts with entire composure. Next we mounted a steep ascent over polished rock or scattered shale, just as it happened, and then, after a short distance on level ground, we began a long and difficult descent into the deep gorge, which more or less we followed all the way to the plain, that of the Wady Shaib, now absolutely dry, but which must be in winter, judging from the nature of its bed, a rushing torrent, losing itself finally in the Jordan.

About an hour from Es-Salt we met a boy with a laden donkey, which we passed with some difficulty, and a little farther observed a

spring of water and a khan. There was some question as to whether we should meet with any water in the only other spring upon our route; but it was obviously too early for luncheon, and we continued our way, passing on a hill, to our left, a wely dedicated to Shu'aib, diminutive of Shaib, the Arabic name (used in the Koran) for Jethro, who gives his name to the wady—why is not obvious.

About noon we reached the Ain Es-Shech, and our horses were not slow in discovering that water of a kind was to be had. There was, at all events, welcome shade from a magnificent, wide-spreading fig-tree, the branches of which, growing close to the side of the hill, were available as couches and resting-places for half of its height. We boiled the water again and again, and fished out all its most striking disadvantages, though some were, unfortunately, less obvious than the microbes during a recent cholera scare at Bethlehem, which were reported by those personally interested in the quarantine question to be "as large as a napoleon."

CHAPTER VIII

THE JORDAN VALLEY

“Jordan past”

NOTHING during the rest of that day's ride contributed so much to our entertainment as the conduct of the white baggage-horse. He was the pair of Sadowi, and of very similar appearance, but had not been selected to carry the Lady because he was, like most Arabs, and some Arab horses, blind of one eye. It had not at first dawned upon him that his companion had received promotion, but the fact had been lately revealed by some accident, and had been working in his mind ever since. To-day things had come to a climax, and he now perceived that not only had Sadowi escaped from the hateful and galling pack-saddle—in itself a preposterous load—not only had he a much lighter burden to carry, but he was giving himself airs of superiority, and travelling, as a rule, the foremost of the entire cavalcade. Such autocracy was not to be endured, and could and should be put a stop to; if he reigned he should not reign alone. The creature, a worthy and ex-

cellent baggage horse, doing his duty in his own state of life, now became self-willed and persistent under the overmastering influence of this dominant idea. We called him the "majnoon," the name which the Arabs give to the half-crazy men, generally derwiches, who wander about, living upon the alms of the benevolent. He insisted on keeping up with his comrade. In spite of all inconveniences occasioned by his imperfect sight, his clumsy burden, he generally succeeded in remaining side by side with, or immediately behind, the Lady. If driven back he would persistently push his way past all the rest in turn, till he regained his position, loudly grunting dissatisfaction and determination. As we descended to the plain, and the broad caravan road allowed room for any number to ride abreast on the wide sands, the horse most accustomed to go beside Sadowi made several efforts to take up his usual position, always repulsed by the "majnoon." Sadowi himself, who received an occasional push from the unwieldy heap of baggage, especially when on the blind side of his companion, was not wholly pleased with the arrangement; but whenever the Lady tried to give a wider berth to her inconvenient

attendant, the "majnoon" always followed, discontentedly grunting at the extra strain of the additional pace he compelled himself to assume.

We had become, by this time, exceedingly conscious of the change of climate, which had occurred even since the morning, and much more so since we left the Belka. The gorges had been hot and close, the sands of the plain seemed to radiate heat, and the level rays of the sun, as we rode westward, produced towards evening, that sense of brain fatigue indescribable to those who do not know their effect in an Oriental climate—to many far more exhausting than the direct heat and glare of midday. The moment, however, that the great god sank to rest behind the hills of Judæa, we luxuriated to the full in the wonderful beauty of the brief twilight. Away to the east, almost without our perceiving it, the purple hills arose once more to shut out from us that enchanted world of which we had taken one brief glimpse. A distant flame, lurid against the pearly sky, showed us that the charcoal-burners were still at work. Wreaths of white mist lay in the hollows of the mountains; while the clear mirror of the Dead Sea, stretching far as the eye could reach, reflected the hills of Judæa, dark masses,

looking across the wide plain to the evening glow beyond. A single line, standing up like a needle against the west, showed us the Russian tower on the Mount of Olives, reminder of all that world of politics, and rivalry, and ambition, of which for a few days we had so gladly lost sight. Even our old friend the jujube-tree, *zizyphus*, was here again, reminding us that we were once more in subtropical surroundings, and several times we had to stoop to the horses' necks to avoid its unwelcome embraces.

It was some hours since we had met with anything human; but, as the darkness gathered, the glare of camp fires broke out here and there, among the bushes, and, far away, the lights of Jericho seemed to beckon us to the repose we were beginning to need. Suddenly we came upon a weird scene—an assembly of the black tents of the Bedu, a bright fire in the midst. Quite a large number of men were gathered about the flaming pile, some preparing supper, others tending the animals—horses, asses, camels—tethered beside the tents or left free to wander in search of food among the undergrowth of scrub. “Waiting to cross the Jordan Bridge,” it was whispered among us, together with a warning that we must approach this Rubicon

as silently as possible, lest we should provoke the jealousy and rivalry of others less fortunate than ourselves, and cause superfluous discussion, and delay — for even those who had fulfilled the necessary conditions of a now practically unlimited quarantine, might not cross the river after sunset.

We rode on silently to the water's edge, and drew rein while Khalil went forward, barefoot, to secure the opening of the gates before we ventured in the darkness upon the slippery and rotten planks. There was a cautious knocking, a long, low-toned parley. Our mukari returned, and there was more parley among our leaders, and a suggestion made of "a few napoleons," emphatically negatived by the Professor. Khalil returned to his conference, and came back with a request for papers. The Arabic-speaking Sportsman, armed with a portentous sheaf of teskerys (local passports) and permits, went forward, soon returning, for an instant, to tell us to get off our horses, for the poor beasts, becoming restless, were making too much noise. This, we felt, implied that we must be resigned to further delay, and we stretched ourselves upon the sand, each securely holding the tether of his own horse, which would otherwise have

been off in an instant in search of food ; for their supper hour was already past, and they had had nothing since yesterday.

Entertainment did not fail us. In the camp we had passed, the Bedu had finished their supper, and were now amusing themselves about the camp fire, which flared high, and showed every detail more clearly than daylight. First there was dancing and singing, both of the kind which seems to us so singularly uninspiring—the tunes moving over about four notes, the dance of about, perhaps, as many steps, accompanied by shouts and hand - clappings ; men dancing with each other, of course, or rather opposite to each other, each occasionally resting his hands upon his neighbour's shoulders. When this amusement palled, each kilted his kumbaz into his waistband as one has seen a Blue-coat School boy dispose of his very similar garment for precisely the same amusement, of playing—leap-frog ! With long, bronzed limbs, clean cut as those of a race-horse, with not a superfluous pound of flesh and not an ounce that was not muscle, it was really exciting to see these children of the desert vying with each other in the familiar game, after a fashion which would be edifying at Eton or Harrow.

No ; it was not amusement that lacked, it was water ! It was nearly eight hours since we had had those precious cups of tea at Ain es-Shech, and what we had brought away with us was, for the most part, finished. One member of the party, an especially thirsty soul, whose supply had long been exhausted, looked with ever-increasing longing at the flask of the absent Sportsman. It was one of those admirable aluminium flasks, covered with felt, which kept the liquid exquisitely cool and sweet, and it had been hanging all day at the saddle-bow, and must now be ice cold. The very thought added to his sufferings, as the beauty of that luscious apple on a hot Oriental noontide may have increased the longing of our mother Eve. "Water, water everywhere, and not a drop to drink !" The Jordan murmured sweetly at our feet, rippling gently, and shining silver clear in the starlight ; but the cholera about the Lake of Galilee, whence came that tempting stream, was a real and mortal disease, and not the "backsheesh cholera" prevalent elsewhere. But that flask ! He knew it to be half full—a fact which in itself showed that the Sportsman was not in thirsty mood : no man who knew anything of thirst—thirst such as this—thirst which made one indifferent to all

else—would carry about with him a supply of delicious, reviving nectar, medicine alike for body and soul—a pint of ice-cold tea! No; it was absolutely certain that were he here, that kindly Sportsman, he would press the gift upon him, insist upon his acceptance. Here in the East are there any laws so binding, are there any rules of honour, of generosity, so inflexible as those which concern the question of water? The most niggardly will give, the most selfish will share, the most churlish will not refuse. How long will that worthy Sportsman tarry?

There was a slight, a very slight, rustle in the darkness; something moved beside that treasured flask, truly "the cynosure of neighbouring eyes"; there was the suppressed sound of the withdrawing of a cork, and the whole of the precious liquid went down the throat of the younger mukari! It was impossible to move, to speak; and if there be any test of endurance worse than thirst it is that, under certain circumstances, of compulsory self-suppression!

After that the return of this longed-for friend was a matter almost of indifference, and the information he brought was but unimportant in the presence of that mighty thirst. The guardians of the bridge returned our papers,

which they probably could not read; they knew nothing of the Professor's special privileges, or considered them a mere pretext for the avoidance of backsheesh; there was cholera in Kerak; who was to say that we had not spent these ten days in Kerak?—quarantine was compulsory; no one crossed the bridge after sunset; they were heartless, relentless, immovable, deaf to explanation. The hasty return of some Bedu, who had also striven to enter with a caravan of laden asses, and who, probably having some personal reason for travelling at this hour, would have no conscientious scruples in offering backsheesh, confirmed the report of the guardians' inflexibility.

To pass the night, weary as we were, upon this dry sand, beside a cool, murmuring stream, with waving branches overhead, would be no special hardship. The camp fires about us would keep off the jackals, which were answering each other's cries across the plain; we had blankets, we had even food. Alas! however, we had no drink, and then, our poor horses!—kind, patient servants that they were: to-day, at the end of, in some respects, the hardest day's work of the whole expedition, for, although they had done little climbing, their 'long twelve hours'

steady work had been endured in burning sun and without the refreshing breezes of the Belka. The three baggage animals had not even had the relief of nearly an hour's freedom from their burdens, such as the others had enjoyed, during the long conference. And again, for ourselves, how were we, some of us especially, to endure the continued thirst?

"Bonsoir, madame, bonsoir, messieurs! je regrette - je vous en prie—venez prendre un peu de café chez nous—vous reposer un peu!"

This messenger of mercy was a charming young man, beautifully dressed, smiling, debonnaire, shaking hands with all of us in turn. In a few minutes we had walked across the bridge; the tramp behind us of our horses' feet was convincing that it was not all a dream; in a few minutes more we were seated about the door of a comfortable tent, carpets were under our feet, the Lady had an easy-chair, the men had stools; the light of a lantern showed comfortable domesticity within; we were drinking sherbet, we were revived with cognac, we were refreshed with fruit, and the preparation of coffee was in rapid progress.

By degrees we understood what had happened. The wardens of the bridge, after the fashion of

subordinates "clothed in a little brief authority," had taken our affairs into their own hands, and turned a deaf ear to all explanation. Somehow, however, the matter had finally come to the ears of the superior officer, an important functionary, who at sunset, his duty done, had retired to his tent at some little distance. The name of the Professor, carried to intelligent ears, had had its immediate effect—and here we were, relieved of all apprehension, and luxuriously awaiting the moonrise for the accomplishment of our journey.

Nothing could exceed the kindness of our welcome. Our new friend presented his card to each of us, and we in turn wrote down our names on paper, that all might feel friendly and at home. We discussed common acquaintances among the Jerusalem effendis, promised exchange of visits, sympathised as to the monotony of a solitary existence on the banks of the Jordan, and were interested in hearing—from a Moslem—that such things were all very well for John the Baptist or Elijah, but now one's ideas were different. When conversation failed we ate nuts, almonds, delicious salted pistachios : an Arab, even in the wilderness of Judæa, is certain to be not far from nuts. The spirit of hospitality was so diffused that when the Lady was about to reject one she was unable to

crack in her fingers, the negro servant gently took it, cracked it with his own gleaming teeth, and returned it to her.

He was one of those big negroes common in this country and known as *haji* (pilgrims), probably because they often arrive with the Mecca caravan, or even come on their own account to the mosque at Jerusalem, the secondary pilgrimage of the Moslem faith. They are employed as guardians of property, much as, at home, we employ watch-dogs, and may be seen everywhere, sitting at the doors of public buildings or at the gates of enclosed spaces. If you wish to enter a courtyard you knock at the door, and call out "Haj!" certain that a giant negro will appear upon the scene. They are said to be extraordinarily faithful, allowing themselves to be misused and beaten rather than depart from the strict letter of the commands they have received from their employers. The negro in question was clad in snow-white robes, and as he leaned up against the door of the tent in the starlight, absolutely motionless when not employed, the intense blackness of his countenance showing between his white turban and white kumbaz, it was difficult to realise that he was of ordinary humanity and not a picture in a fairy-tale book.

Presently the moon looked over the heights of the mountains of Moab, just as last night she had arisen above the Jebel Osha, and, if only for the sake of our famishing steeds, we felt we must not delay. Our host insisted upon sending an escort with us, alleging the difficulty of finding the way among those weird hills and along the trackless sands. On being assured that our men were competent to conduct us he still most courteously insisted, and finally a sufficient reason transpired which, out of kindness, he had so far withheld. It appeared that soldiers were secreted in the wilderness on the lookout for criminals, of some nature not specified, who were expected to attempt to escape by night into the border country at the south end of the Dead Sea, the city of refuge for the desperate and lawless, and it was just possible we might have some inconvenience.

We gratefully accepted his kindness, and took our leave. We had already received a lesson in hospitality, now we were to have one in deportment. We could not but feel that our own adieux were lacking in grace, in gratitude, in dignity, when compared with those of our friend; so gracious without *empressement*, so respectful without servility—in short, so entirely all that is

most attractive in the higher-class Oriental. The Professor, who had learned much in the school of Bedu, alone showed to advantage, and seemed to possess a courtesy not wholly graceless and European.

Our next lesson was in horsemanship. Our escorting soldier was as nearly ubiquitous as it was in the nature of man and horse to be. A distant caravan of camels showed sharp against the sky. He had flashed up to them, interrogated them, and was back, beating up our rear, and again in front, indicating the track we were to pursue; for Khalil had abandoned responsibility, and was frankly asleep on the top of a pile of baggage. Even the "majnoon" had wearily desisted from his ambitions, and had retired to the rear with his humbler companions.

If that strange world had seemed weird and visionary in the morning twilight, it was even more so under the moon, where the silent sand cities cast long shadows of a blackness so intense as to be comparable only to those of electric light. Indeed, this Oriental moonlight has nothing of that quality of softness—the half-revealing, half-concealing gleams, to which we are accustomed in the West. It is hard, clear, metallic. It is a peculiarity, perhaps, of this Syrian atmosphere

that outlines appear so sharp that they lose, apparently, in solidity ; in what artists call "the round," so that the distant view of Jerusalem, for example, has the effect of stage scenery, of an absolute lack of perspective, which makes it extraordinarily difficult to compare distances. To-night, for instance, when a vista between the sand hills allowed us to perceive the village of Jericho, it seemed inconceivable that we should not reach it in a few minutes, and yet it was already after eleven o'clock before the splash of our horses' feet in the water, told us that we were crossing the brook Cherith.

At this point our soldier disappeared, flashed out of sight—his kind intention, as we soon found, being to arouse the haj, the solitary occupant of the hotel, and apprise him of our arrival. We had not to wait long before the gates were opened and the barking of the dogs exchanged for a kindly welcome. They were old friends, degenerate descendants of some far-away mastiff, and still more distant collie, who had made *mésalliances* with some son or daughter of the soil, and left traces of another race, much as we trace the Crusader in the blue eyes and fair hair, of which specimens remain, here and there, in almost every village in Syria.

There was naturally no fire, and dreams of tea were destined to disappointment; but there were other combinations obtainable where water was good and abundant, from which we were not averse. Have we not, some of us, drunk "Ben Nevis" on Mount Lebanon and "Talisker" in glens other than those of Skye? We had food with us, though our friends' hospitalities had left us little appetite, and we made no complaint—having water and towels—that sheets were not forthcoming. All that lacked, in this semi-tropical atmosphere, was a sweet-scented breeze from off the Belka.

We rose somewhat sadly next morning, and compared our twilight start with that of nine days ago—sad, not as so often happens, from any consciousness of anticipations unfulfilled, of hopes disappointed, but only because those golden days were now buried with the past.

We rested for some time at the Good Samaritan Inn, and wrote some picture postcards, to be stamped—strange anachronism—with the postmark *Bon Samaritain*! Perhaps twopence was a large sum in New Testament days, or it may be that good man had a long bill when he "came again"; or, still more likely, the progress of civilisation and of religion has relegated hospi-

ality and trustworthiness to the ignorant and savage Bedu. Anyway, the shilling demanded seemed to us a good deal to pay for a cup of tea and a biscuit.

We had no further adventure, and stopped but once, to photograph the stone which Abraham brought on his back from some distant place—variously stated as Hebron and Damascus. Whoever shall place his back under that stone will be reinforced for carrying his own especial burden. We looked back now with a sense of familiar friendship at those grey hills, which had so lately been among the limitations of life, with a realisation of widened knowledge and added sympathies, which, on our return to the commonplace burdens of every day, should move us to thankfulness and not to regret. Each evening now the sunset glow would seem to smile to us from the faces of old friends, telling of a country beyond—fairer, purer, it may be, than ours, but in its friendships, its loves, its presentation of the beautiful, not very different from this.

We reached home in time for luncheon, and it is fair to record that the “majnoon,” grunting and breathless, was in at the death.

IN GALILEE AND SAMARIA

CHAPTER I

TO NABLUS

“And then men go to Shiloh, where the ark of God with the relics were long kept . . . and after men go to Shechem, formerly called Sichar . . . and there is a fair and good city, called Neapolis, whence it is a day’s journey to Jerusalem.”

SIR JOHN MAUNDEVILLE, 1322

THOSE who have undertaken the education of the tourist have instilled into him, among other irresponsible statements, the superstition that one can travel in the Holy Land only during the three spring months of the year, thus leaving the far more agreeable season from September to March for the delectation of the serious student. This conviction, and the absence from our party of pith helmets, white umbrellas, hats invested with floating veils, blue spectacles, superfluous luggage, broken-kneed horses, dragomans, and other impediments to comfort and convenience, made possible the unsportsmanlike start which otherwise might have caused a careless observer to mistake us for the “Personally Conducted.”

To drive in a carriage as far as El Bireh, sending our horses in advance, was however a venial sin; for the ride to Nablûs was before us, the first three or four hours being along a highroad of very moderate interest; and, at best, we could not hope to get in before night-fall, in spite of our start at six o'clock on a December morning.

We were a very attenuated party—only the Lady and the Doctor remaining of our former group. We were reinforced, however, by the Artist, a lady whose saddle-bags were weighty with cameras and sketching-blocks; and by another learned doctor, who, on account of his association with a celebrated guide-book, we designated “Baedeker.” Sitting in a carriage is not inspiring, and even the sight of the Holy City in the sunrise, viewed from Mount Scopus, as purple in the morning as it is pink in the evening, failed to arouse our conversational powers. The tribe of Benjamin welcomed us coldly on the broad plain assigned to it, and we could think only with some dejection, of the bygone days when this plucky little people could afford to lose twenty-five thousand men in a single battle (Judges xx.), and when the six hundred who held out on yonder hill of Ramah,

repudiated by all their neighbours, possessed themselves of wives in the good old Sabine fashion, and made a fresh start in their frontier colony. Fifteen Moslem families now inherit the traditions of former glory; and, indeed, the population hereabouts is very thinly scattered. It is whispered that some of the villages have so evil a reputation that the neighbouring districts now, as two or three thousand years ago, are wont to say: "There shall not any of us give his daughter unto Benjamin to wife"—the women already established there not being desirable associates for those otherwise brought up.

At El Bireh our vehicle drew up in front of the khan or village inn, where there is a good deal of accommodation for horses, and a single small room for man. There we breakfasted, while our steeds were collected and our saddlebags dispersed. We had no baggage-horses, and had all our personal belongings, as well as fodder for the beasts, to distribute as best we could, so that we were unable to accede to the characteristically Oriental request of a Greek priest that we would relieve him and his horse of a part of their burden. We had been at El Bireh before, and so did not linger to see the

ruins of the very fine Church and Hospice of the Knights of St John, which testify to its former renown. The church, which is of the same ground-plan as that of St Anne at Jerusalem and that of St Cleophas at Qoubeibeh (probably Emmaus), had three naves, terminating in a triapsidal chancel. It was rebuilt by the Crusaders, who had here a fortress and stronghold. The tradition which it commemorates, is that it was here, a day's journey from Jerusalem, that the child Jesus was missed by His parents, who returned to seek Him. There is also a further tradition that it was here that, seated under a palm-tree, the prophetess Deborah judged Israel. The palm-trees remain, with many other signs of the fertility produced by the presence of an excellent spring.

No horses were visible, although we were assured that they had left Jerusalem at two o'clock—a statement we ventured to doubt when they were at length produced, still perspiring, and obviously overdriven. The Arab has little idea of time, and, indeed, Khalil's sense of veracity never permits him to make a promise more definite than : *Jumkin inshallah*—"Perhaps, if God will" ; and his idea of futurity is limited to *bookra* or *ba'ad bookra*—literally, "to-morrow,"

or "after to-morrow," but used as equivalent to "by-and-bye," near or remote. The Arab has no compunction in keeping you waiting; but is equally indifferent to losing time himself, and cheerfully sits down on your doorstep until you are ready to give him attention. "Baedeker," much experienced, had carefully selected his own saddle and bridle, sound ones, the pride of their owner, who had naturally reserved them for the decoration of his stables, and had sent the usual aggregation of unrelated straps, patched leather, and rotten string. Our friend had a fluent command of Arabic and some half-dozen other languages, and he expressed his views on the manners and customs of the country at considerable length to Abdallah, who was no further moved than to ejaculate: *Ana baraf? Allah baraf*—"Do I know? God knows" when his patron's breath was exhausted, and to pass the palm of his left hand over the back of his right, the palm of his right over the back of his left, in testimony of his personal innocence and irresponsibility.

The Lady was, of course, faithful to her old friend Sadowi; but the horses all knew the Nablûs road, and, having no desire to better their acquaintance, professed disinclination in

various forms. Somewhere about 1900 it was decided to make a road between the capitals of Judæa and Samaria—Jerusalem and Nablûs—and all the beasts of both towns are well aware of the undertaking, which has been finished only as far as El Bireh, the remainder, some nine hours' journey, being in various stages of that incompleteness which is so infinitely more discouraging than no road at all. As, however, we could see for some miles ahead of us what bore the aspect of a *Sultaniyeh*, the Turkish equivalent for the king's highway, some of us weakly proposed to take the carriage farther. This, however, we found impossible, as the road at present is only to be looked at—a wise provision, as we later discovered.

At Beitin, about half-an-hour farther, we passed from the territory of Benjamin to that of Ephraim, from Judæa into Samaria, from the arid and treeless Jerusalem district into the verdure, the colour, the obviously greater prosperity which one finds anywhere else. Surely every traveller who permits himself to think, unfettered by conventionality and tradition, must continually ask himself why the Jewish people should have taken for their capital a site which, however "beautiful for situation," was, from the

point of view of milk and honey, of vineyards and olive-yards, of corn and wine, inferior to almost any other in Palestine; where water must always have been scarce, and the hillsides bare, though, undoubtedly, less arid and desolate than now; where the winter winds and the summer siroccos were more pitiless than anywhere else; where the soil was shallow, and the season of possible cultivation short. So long as one is in the Holy City, under the spell of its influences, of its associations, sacred and profane, its interests, literary and archæological, its Babel of tongues, its cosmopolitan population, its immigrants from every corner of the world, so long as one hears the music of its place-names, as one feels the enchantment of its moonlight, sunlight, starlight, of its colouring, of its life—so long is one prepared to echo the vauntings of the Psalmist and the prophets; but one has only to visit almost any other spot in Palestine to ask, from the point of view of common-sense and the practical, why Joshua did not settle in Shechem, or David in his native town of Bethlehem; why Abraham was not satisfied with Hebron, or Solomon with the plain of Sharon; or here at Beitin, assuming it to be Bethel, why

Samuel did not remain permanently, instead of returning from his annual visits to his shelterless home, perched on the arid hilltop, north-west of Jerusalem.

In the Middle Ages Bethel was located farther north, near Nablûs, but later historians identify it with Beitin. It is a miserable village, with only the remains of a crusading church—said to be on the site of Jacob's vision, now a mosque—to recall past prosperity ; but there is abundance of water, and everything was looking green and fresh after the early rains. The associations, Jacob's dream, the burial of Rebecca's nurse, Jeroboam's golden calf, Elisha's bears, seemed to diminish in historical perspective when we heard of a circle of stones of probable religious significance and extreme antiquity, and very rare, west of the Jordan ; but time would not permit us to examine them. There is a fine reservoir, 300 by 200 feet, which has a spring in the middle ; and all about were scattered hewn stones and remains of columns, which one is free to fancy may have belonged, as is said, to the temple of the golden calf. A little beyond lie the pleasant little villages of Jifna and Bir es Zet, occupied by Christians, with churches belonging to both Greek and Latin Catholics, some English

missionaries, and a school supported by the American Quakers of Ramallah, about an hour away, who, here and elsewhere, have excellent institutions of a really useful and practical kind.

Ruins on various hilltops remind us that the district was of importance in Roman times, that Jifna was the capital of one of the ten toparchies into which the Romans divided Judæa, and that, probably on account of its importance as the great north road, several points of vantage were fortified by the Crusaders—a stronghold known as Casale Saint Giles, after Count Raymond of Saint Giles, having its special significance for the English.

The Lady was particularly interested in a hill lying to the south, as being associated with a piece of folklore of which a close variant is found in the Outer Hebrides. An inhabitant of Jifna, returning home from fulfilling his Passover obligations in Jerusalem, was recounting the wonders which had lately taken place in the Holy City—the life and death of Jesus of Nazareth. His friends were quite disposed to believe in the miracles of healing related, but when he concluded with the account of the Resurrection his wife, who was plucking a fowl for supper, observed: “Your story is just as probable as that

this cock should fly out of my hands and escape"; upon which the bird returned to life, and, flying through the door of the house, alighted upon the opposite hill, which is called *Jebel ed deek*—Hill of the Cock—to this day (*cf.* Goodrich-Freer "Outer Isles," Chap. x.). According to some, the village of Et-tayyibeh, which fronted us as we left Beitin, is "the city called Ephraim," where Jesus retired after the miracle of the raising of Lazarus, so that something of His fame was, perhaps, already known in the neighbourhood.

Truly, the tribe of Ephraim had a beautiful inheritance! All the way we go are signs of a rich abundance such as our eyes are little accustomed to; fig-trees, whose wide-spreading branches sweep the ground; olive-trees, whereof the young shoots, the biblical "olive branches," have grown into veritable individual trees, and each hoary veteran stands king in a little grove of his own kindred. In a narrow valley, where there is only just room for the new road above the bed of what must be at times a torrent, we noticed many Jewish tombs cut into the rocks on our left, and stopped to examine one, of more elaborate workmanship than the others, having the seven-branched candlestick sharply cut into

the rock to the left of the entrance, three pairs of branches turning upward and four downward.

Two of the party turned aside to visit the village of Seilun, lying about half-an-hour east of the road—a scene of manifold interest. The view alone is worth the *détour*, affording the first glimpse of Hermon, the great landmark of Palestine and Syria—a chain extending for about twenty miles, and averaging over 9000 feet in height. The identification of Seilun with Shiloh,¹ at once brings to the mind a crowd of associations—the resting-place, from the time of Joshua to that of Solomon, of the Ark of the Covenant; the scene of the prayer of Hannah, and of the dedication of Samuel; of the life and tragic death of Eli; of the visit, in disguise, of the wife of Jeroboam.

Nothing is more tiresome than the conventionality which obliges a tourist, at sight of a bat or an owl, to recall some quotation or apply a prophecy, as if bats and owls were never found unannounced by the minor prophets; but the utter desolation of Seilun, ruined even in the time of

¹ One can hardly feel doubt as to the identification, the biblical description being so very exact: "Shiloh, which is on the north side of Bethel, on the east side of the highway that goeth up from Bethel to Shechem [*i.e.* Nablûs], and on the south of Lebonah [*i.e.* Lubban]."

St Jerome, can hardly fail to remind the spectator of the words in Jeremiah, although we do not know the nature of the catastrophe referred to: "Go ye now unto My place which was in Shiloh, where I set My name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of My people Israel." The mound is covered with débris of buildings, hewn stones, broken columns, and fragments of carving. One of the more complete among the ruins is evidently built of fragments from some earlier structure, the lintel of the door, now fallen, being a monolith covered with beautiful sculpture. The main building, a mediæval fortress church, is some 33 feet square, the roof having been supported by four columns with Corinthian capitals. A small mosque has been added on the east side at some later period, and is known as *Jâmi' el Arba' in*—the forty companions of the Prophet. These forty saints turn up in various forms in Palestine—Jewish, Christian, and Moslem; and at Ramleh (Arimathea, probably) the same tower has done service in honour both of the forty Christian martyrs and of the forty companions of the Prophet. An exceedingly realistic picture in the Armenian cathedral at Jerusalem supplies full details of the martyrdom. Upon Mount

Carmel we have a sacred grove known as "the trees of the forty" (*i.e.* martyrs), and near Nablûs we passed a chapel known as Rijal el-'Amud—"Men of the Columns"—the burial-place of forty Jewish prophets. The new road came to an end at the thirty-fifth kilometre, just after the separation of our party. It had passed through various stages illustrative of the history of road-making, and had lately been reduced to the merest anatomy, wholly destitute of covering. It now reverted to the piles of rocks which, under the name of roads, are to be so carefully avoided in the East—at best resembling the bed of a mountain torrent, but more often the wreck of a Yorkshire wall. The riders naturally made their way across the nearest ploughed fields, and finally, by a precipitous descent, found themselves in the small plain or wide valley of the Lubban, where a busy scene presented itself. In a corner of the triangular plain, or at the mouth of the valley, as one prefers to regard it, an abundant spring takes its rise beside the ruins of an ancient khan, and here large numbers of fellahin and Bedu had paused to water their cattle, horses, and camels. Here our party reunited once more, and here we lunched, to the great amusement of a large audience, who

were particularly entertained with our spirit-lamps. A testimony to the greater fertility of this district was afforded by the immense flocks of birds passing over our heads eastwards, probably to the newly-sown fields, and by the rooks following the plough.

It was after three o'clock before we were again on our way, and the twilight soon overtook us, although we did our best to push on, warned of a very bad descent before we should reach the great plain framed by the hills of Samaria. Just below this descent, and before coming into the Plain of El-Makhna, we met the other end of the new road coming out from Nablûs to meet that from Jerusalem. We avoided it with much care, grateful to the whiteness of its newly-macadamised surface for warning us, in the darkness, where not to go. For something like three hours the great hills of Ebal and Gerizim loomed vast before us; while far away we knew the great snow crown of Hermon must be looking down upon us; but we had little pleasure in our ride, for the darkness had already descended, and from lack of interest we were all tired. Even the Arab servants, Khalil and Abdallah, did not talk, and only from time to time broke out into song. So many persons

of all kinds must traverse this road from Jerusalem to Nablûs, and so few but tourists must trouble themselves to carry tents, that one wonders someone does not establish a decent khan to serve as half-way house in the twelve or thirteen hours' ride—though it might be difficult to say where, as the Christian villages of Bir es Zet and Jifna occur too early in the day's march from Jerusalem. However, when the new road is once opened, some of the neighbouring villages, El Lubban, for instance, may send out feelers in the direction of the highway of commerce.

The stars, of a brightness of which we know nothing in the West, came out suddenly, as if a curtain had been withdrawn, not piercing the darkness one by one, as with us; and soon a radiant moon looked over the top of the great screen of mountains on our left; and when, by-and-bye, we turned, somewhat suddenly, west, we had sufficient light to be conscious of the great hills of Ebal and Gerizim on either hand, and to catch a glimpse of the enclosure around Joseph's Tomb and, a little farther on, Jacob's Well. Our horses, who had been dejected and uninterested all day, seemed to be aware that the worst was over, and, sud-

denly reviving, were soon clattering over the cobble-stones of Nablûs. At every turn we expected to be stopped by a demand for our teskerys (passports), or some other formality, as in no town in Palestine is the traveller so subject to demands for backsheesh as here, and it was with some surprise, as well as relief, that we found ourselves in the spacious reception-room of the convent. By a kindly provision of the patriarchate in Jerusalem, here and at certain other places, one can obtain very comfortable sleeping accommodation and the means of preparing food.

CHAPTER II

TO SAMARIA

"What these rites [*i.e.* of the Samaritans] are, I could not certainly learn, but that their religion consists in the adoration of a calf, as the Jews give out, seems to have more of spite than of truth in it."—HENRY MAUNDRELL, 1697

WE rose early next morning, in order to view the sights of Nablûs, and returned in a couple of hours, in entire sympathy with the desire of the Jews to have no dealings with the Samaritans—not that we found the Jews themselves particularly attractive, for they are here of that type of feature, so rarely seen in the East, which we habitually associate with a Cockney accent.

The town lies in a long, narrow streak between Ebal and Gerizim, the sole pass in the central mountain range of Palestine, the farthest north of the line of cities—Shechem, Shiloh, Bethel, Bethlehem, Jerusalem, and Hebron—long commercially important, and, from the abundance of water and surrounding fertility, capable of becoming what it perhaps once was—a really beautiful city. It contains the ruins of many

churches, now all converted into mosques ; one, known as the Great Mosque, having been originally built by Justinian, and restored in 1167 by the canons of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, with much resemblance to their own church. Another mosque of interest, probably originally a hospital of the Templars, is now devoted to the lepers, who here present a miserable spectacle, practically uncared for, in striking contrast to all that is done for them in Jerusalem, where there are two lepers' homes—one supported by the Government, and nursed by the Sœurs de Charité ; the other, and larger, by the German Moravians.

From the aspect of the Jewish and Samaritan inhabitants one may gather that the soap produced in fifteen factories is mainly an article of export. The Moslem population, which amounts to over 20,000, is more prosperous in appearance ; and, indeed, Nablûs is a somewhat thriving centre of trade in wool and cotton. There are about 700 Christians, mainly of the Greek Church. The Franciscans, as well as the Jerusalem patriarchate, have churches and schools ; and there is a small Protestant community, now in the hands of the C.M.S., originally founded, on very different lines, by Bowen, afterwards Bishop

of Sierra Leone, who was a practical philanthropist and who established looms, gave technical instruction in various arts, instilled cleanliness and sanitation, and taught his flock to earn an honest living ; after which, by degrees, and having spent himself and his substance, he gave them religious instruction. The Moslems have a girls' school and college, and several elementary schools.

We picked our way to the Jewish quarter through heaps of decaying vegetable matter and along roofed passages, dark as a cellar, and where only in the middle could one walk upright, into the Samaritan settlement, which was decidedly cleaner and more airy, but where the inhabitants, spoilt by the tourists, were clamorous for backsheesh. At every step we were tormented by would-be vendors of antiques, mainly cufic coins, the very school children bringing torn pages from their copy-books for sale to the Frenjy who were known, by experience, to be ready to buy, irrespective of the value of the articles of commerce. As a matter of fact, we did buy, from a member of the high priest's family, an Arabic seal, a silver medal of some Roman Catholic community, and some models of the rolls of the Law ingeniously made out of kerosene tins! What Palestine did before Russia and Asia Minor

sent her kerosene in cubical tins, known as "gas-boxes," it is difficult to imagine—not on account of the "gas," which is, however, cheap and good, but on account of the tins, which are, in their natural state, the water-cans, flower-boxes, general receptacles, and even wine and spirit barrels, for every household. With slight additions and a little manipulation they become garden watering-pans, dust-pans, sieves, culinary vessels of various kinds, lamps, lamp-shades, reflectors, stoves, baths, musical instruments, spoons, forks, and brush handles. They serve the errand-boys for baskets, and the children for toys; they supply material for buildings, from a dog-kennel or stable up to an entire suburb of Jerusalem, known as the Box Colony—the houses, constructed out of miscellaneous materials, being entirely faced with "gas-tins"; they are raw material for the tin-smith, the gunsmith, and, in some degree, for the leather trade, as we found traces of them in our harness. And here, in Nablûs, they turned up afresh, effectively modelled into the likeness of some of the oldest bookbinding in the world.

We found ourselves, finally, in a small square or court inhabited by the Samaritan community, where climbing a few stairs, we reached a sort of balcony, in which a score of children were

receiving instruction, their feet tucked up in front of them, their shoes piled together in the doorway. We followed two good-looking young men into a small, whitewashed room, the floor of which was covered with matting, and which contained, for all furniture, a sort of reading-stand, upon which were placed, for our inspection, the scrolls of the Law. Of course, we did not see the famous Samaritan Codex—whodoes?—but that exhibited was of sufficiently venerable appearance to appeal to our imagination, and, in a certain sense, to our reverence. It was soiled and worn, in the part exposed, from the frequent handling and kissing of many generations; and the elaborate, gilt cylinders, so often portrayed, might be, for all we knew, of considerable antiquity, although Sir George Grove, who described them nearly fifty years ago, concluded, after careful and expert examination, that the oldest could not claim to be earlier than the fifteenth century. Even had we been privileged to see the celebrated Codex itself we should not have believed that it was written by Abisha, the son of Phinehas, nor even—the alternative tradition—by Manasseh, the high priest in the time of Ezra. The Samaritans keep all the Jewish festivals, but sacrifice only at the Passover. They ignore all the traditional litera-

ture, and teach only the Pentateuch, and, according to many travellers' tales, and even a popular guide-book, the "Book of Joshua," which, however, is not a sacred volume but a mediæval MS., written in Arabic, with proper names in Samaritan, and describing the adventures of their race from Moses to Alexander. This, with a few prayers and hymns, constitutes all their literature.

No one can feel indifferent to this little community, "sent to Coventry" some two thousand five hundred years ago, when the Jews refused to allow them to share in the rebuilding of the Temple on the ground that they were mere colonists, destitute of genealogy, and that no one knew who they were, or where they came from. No wonder that the Samaritans, under the circumstances, should have set up rival Holy Places, like the Greeks and Latins, respectively, in Jerusalem to-day. Here they are still, however, on the same spot; while the Jews, who despised them as a mushroom population, are wanderers over the face of the earth. They are said to be decreasing in numbers, and amount now to only about one hundred and sixty. Benjamin of Tudela estimated them in the twelfth century as only one hundred in Nablûs; but in those days they had adherents in Ascalon, Cæsarea, and Damascus—

amounting to one thousand in all. Now, this is their only settlement; the little, whitewashed synagogue the sole outward and visible sign of their race, their faith, and even their dialect, for in the ordinary affairs of life they use Arabic.

The office of high priest is hereditary in the tribe of Levi, and it is interesting to note that he holds, in addition, the secular dignity of president of the community, and is, moreover, one of the district authorities. Jerusalem has some personal acquaintance with his son and heir-apparent, who makes occasional visits to the Holy City for various purposes, including the sale of manuscripts, not, perhaps, quite convincing as to their antiquity or value; but the scion of a high priest must live, even if the methods should bring him occasionally within the arm of the Law. The official stipend is derived from tithes paid by the faithful, who, unfortunately, have little to tithe.

Their festivals have been often described; and the Samaritan Passover has become a commonplace of tourists, though, happily, there are still some to whom the slaughter and disembowelling of half-a-dozen poor little lambs, which have been tamed and kept as domestic pets, is not a pleasing

sight at close quarters. One feels especially thankful for the Gospel dispensation on reading in the twentieth century such details as the following :—" Whilst the six lambs were thus lying together, with their blood streaming from them, and in their last convulsive struggles, the young *shochetim* (five lads, who acted as butchers) dipped their fingers in the blood, and marked a spot on the foreheads and noses of the children. The same was done to some of the females."

Importunate Jews and Samaritans followed us back to the convent, their numbers increased by inquisitive Moslems coming to see the Frenjys fleeced, and a few especially impudent girls, who demanded backsheesh on the ground that they "sat down in the English school." We speedily convinced the entire crowd that we were not tourists, much to the satisfaction of the officers of the convent, who suffer much from the visitors of their guests.

"Baedeker" was on business, and we were obliged to postpone, to some future occasion, several visits we would have gladly paid; above all, the ascent of Mount Ebal, whence one has a view practically over the whole of Palestine—a country, be it remembered, however, containing no more square miles than that of Wales.

Gerizim is, historically, the more famous of the two, and that most frequented, as by far the easier climb; but a view from Carmel to Jaffa, from the Mediterranean to the mountains of Moab, would have been to some of us more suggestive, and of deeper significance, than the Moslem wely alleged to contain the skull of St John the Baptist, or even the church, possibly of the Justinian period, which may be on the site of the Temple of Gerizim destroyed by Hyrcanus, rival to that at Jerusalem. At Jacob's Well also we would have willingly lingered, grateful to Professor G. A. Smith for leaving us still in possession of the traditional site, which he maintains against many opponents. ("Historical Geography," xviii.) Another site offered for consideration, as that where Abraham prepared for the sacrifice of Isaac, we summarily condemned without trial. Some of us had ridden to Beer-sheba, which we knew to be a good sixteen hours' ride south of Jerusalem, Nablûs being equally a good twelve hours' north, and we failed to understand how an old man and a boy, with an ass heavily burdened, could have made the journey on foot in a period of less than three days! The acoustical properties of the valley between the two mountains need astonish no

one who has seen the position, or indeed many other places in Palestine, where the nature of the limestone formation, the innumerable caves, and the intense clearness of the atmosphere, carry sound to inconceivable distances, and many times we have carried on conversation with persons visible only as a distant speck. On one occasion the Lady, who had left the Artist sketching on some rising ground, and had herself crossed a valley, and climbed a Tell beyond, mindful, though somewhat incredulous, of traditions on the subject, addressed her friend, whose whereabouts she knew, but who otherwise was too distant to be easily visible. To her intense surprise she was promptly answered, and the two were able to carry on conversation without even raising the voice.

We were soon on our way north, anxious to have time to visit Sebaste, the city of Samaria, on our way to Jenin, our next halting-place for the night. The scenery of this district, if pleasing, is as unexciting as the county of Yorkshire. There are bare spaces, rocky and sterile, sloping down into fertile plains. There are pleasant fields and fruitful gardens, and we gathered our first anemones of the season, scarlet and purple and white, and noted that the mandrakes were

coming into bloom—rich, compact masses of violet in their crumpled, primrose-like leaves. Here and there were trickling rills, which, although the season was dry and the early rains had been a disappointment, had enough life left in them to produce bright ribbons of verdure across the plains, which opened out amid detached hills to right and left. Not only the familiar olive-trees scattered over wide tracts of land, but oaks and carobs, and even gardens of fruit-trees—apricots, pears, apples—give to the scenery a homelike air, which to our eyes, long used to the sepias and vandyke-browns of Judæa, was reposeful and refreshing.

We were able to appreciate the observation of Professor G. A. Smith (*op. cit.* Chap. xvi.), that Samaria is the scene of all the long drives of Old Testament history—a fact due to the openness of the country, and the possibility of practicable roads passing among, rather than over, the mountains. It was here that Ahab raced the rain-storm coming up from the Mediterranean—well do we know the tearing, raging “latter rains” of Palestine; here that Jehu drove furiously; here that Naaman came with his horses and with his chariot to visit Elisha; here that Jehu gave a lift to Jehonadab,

the son of Rechab; here that Ahab, who had at least the virtue of courage, was propped up to lead the battle while his life-blood streamed into the midst of his chariot, to be licked by the dogs when it was washed in the pool at Sebaste, whither we were hastening in the morning sunshine.

We passed through two or three villages, each with its gardens and springs, and noted the beauty of the women—a rare sight here, where a woman is a grandmother before thirty and a withered hag at thirty-five. They are more graceful, more shapely of limb, with better-set heads than in Judæa, where a woman's comeliness is measured by weight, especially among the so-called beauties of Bethlehem. We turned out of a well-wooded valley into a wide basin, where a rounded hill, some 300 feet high, rose suddenly in front of us, like an island in a lake, which, in days when it was crowned with a stately city of Greek architecture, and surrounded at the base by a noble colonnade nearly 2000 yards in length, must have been, indeed, an imposing spectacle.

Few spots in the whole of Palestine are possessed of associations more varied and interesting than those of Sebaste, though its history

may be less familiar than that of other cities. Always strategically important, protected by mountains on three sides, looking clear out to the Mediterranean on the fourth, one cannot wonder that Omri should have recognised its value as a stronghold; nor that it should have withstood several prolonged sieges, one lasting until one mother said to another: "Give thy son that we may eat him to-day, and we will eat my son to-morrow," and till an ass's head was sold for fourscore shekels. It must have been down below, in the plain across which we are riding, that a curiously dramatic scene was enacted when the lepers, obliged, even in times of siege, to sit in the gate, argued among themselves that they might as well die by the hand of the enemy, with a chance of food, as sit where they were, with the certainty of starvation—and so ventured into the camp of the Syrians, to find that an aural hallucination of the sound of horses and chariots had caused their flight, so that the poor pariahs "went into one tent, and did eat and drink, and carried thence silver and gold, and raiment, and went and hid it; and came again, and entered into another tent, and carried thence also, and went and hid it." Even the Assyrians blockaded Samaria for

three years before they could possess it. Alexander the Great, Ptolemy Lagos, John Hyrcanus—each in turn invested this little hill rising before us, so green and smiling in the midday sunshine, always an enviable possession. Picture after picture rose before our minds as we rode across the fertile plain, but none more vivid than that of the days of its Greek grace, its Roman luxury, as interpreted by Herod, who named it Sebaste—Greek for Augusta—in honour of his patron, Augustus, who had bestowed upon him the site of the city demolished by Hyrcanus over a century before, though to some degree restored by Gabinius, the successor of Pompey.

Herod it was, who raised the colonnades and gateways which we were approaching ; who built a city, according to Josephus, two miles and a half in circumference ; who beautified it with palace and theatre and hippodrome ; who made it a recruiting centre whence his veterans could collect mercenary troops ; who substituted the worship of Cæsar for the worship of Baal, in a temple, whereof the ruins lie a few score yards beyond those of the great Gothic cathedral of the Crusaders, now turned into a mosque—the site having been originally chosen as that of a

basilica, in honour of the tradition that the body of St John the Baptist was here buried, a tradition dating, at least, from St Jerome. The tombs of Obadiah and Elisha are also shown in the same rock-hewn chamber.

Well might Isaiah call such a spot "The pride of Ephraim, the flower of his glorious beauty, which is on the head of the fat valley!" and when, in addition to all the gifts of Nature, we add all that wealth and art could command, we cannot help reflecting, as on a score of occasions during our journey, here and in Moab, upon the persistent fashion in which history and fact are falsified by conventionality. The literature and art of a thousand years, the teaching of one's childhood, the wilful misapprehension of modern travellers, the conventional treatment of works of devotion, have combined to impress a great number of sincere and devout persons with the general idea that the surroundings of our Lord somewhat resembled those of a Highland fishing village; whereas—in Jerusalem, in Jericho, along the shores of Gennesaret, in Tyre and Sidon, in Cæsarea Philippi, in the cities of the Decapolis, and here in Sebaste—His eyes must have rested upon architecture and sculpture which, even in decay and ruin, are still

a revelation of beauty to such as ourselves, accustomed to the ineffectiveness of the Thames Embankment and the trivialities of Trafalgar Square. Here in this little country of Palestine, two thousand years ago, were palaces and fortresses, theatres and hippodromes, temples, baths, colonnades, porticos, triumphal arches, forums, to which Europe, in this twentieth century, with all her boasted science, her educated "masses," her "art for the million," is at least wise enough to attempt no rivalry. In a Bedawin tent we may recreate the life of the patriarchs, and realise that Abraham was but a wealthy shech; in many a fellah village we may find such kings as the thirty-two who reinforced Benhadad; we may find everywhere types of half the characters, of most of the manners and customs, of the New or Old Testaments. The everlasting hills remain; the stars, as the sand of the sea, still shine out in millions, which in the West the ordinary observer can never look upon; the flowers spring up for us as for Solomon; the patient beasts are but intermittently remembered now as in Holy Writ; the dog is still the victim and not the friend of man; the sheep follow their shepherd—at his voice they separate from the goats; the poor are always with us—but only a

strong effort of imagination, only familiarity with traditions of classic art and luxury, can revive for us the glory of the cities, "over whose acres walked those blessed feet."

On this subject at least may we here enlarge our notions, and "divest our mind of cant!" May we realise something of the glory of the Temptation-vision of our Lord, something of the æsthetic beauty over which He, beholding, wept; may imagine somewhat of the stones and the buildings which were there; may conceive the contrast between the cave-stable of Bethlehem and Herodium, the castle of the Herods, which frowned down upon the Jewish village; between the little group which surrounded the Master when He paused to heal the blind beggars of Jericho, and the sensuous beauty of the city, with its subtropical vegetation, and its luxurious winter homes.

Even Jerash, more perfect in its remains, impressed us less than Sebaste, so unique as to beauty and dignity of position. The mosque, although rich in fragments of what must have been a grand cathedral in the days when Sebaste was a bishopric—the title is still owned by the Greek Church—has been too recently restored, after destruction by fire, to be very interesting.

Our attention was, in fact, somewhat diverted by some handsome Arab boys playing unmitigated hockey within the precincts. On the north sides are the outlines of a square fortress, with corner towers, probably a home of the knights of St John. Mutilated remains of the Maltese cross are still to be traced on many of the stones scattered about Sebaste. M. de Vogüé, who seems to have been the first to show, in plan, a restoration of the buildings, considers that, next to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, this was the most important reconstruction of crusading times. The length is almost 165 feet, the breadth 75. The decoration of the capitals is of the beautiful palm pattern, the arches of the apse are pointed.

“Baedeker,” to whom all this was already familiar, proceeded with the horses to the top of the hill to superintend the servants' preparation for luncheon, as time was precious. We found him, half-an-hour later, sitting in the midst of a group of shechs — young men, women, and children hovering in the background. With their usual absorbent interest in politics—the greater for the rarity of its gratification—they had assembled to hear the latest news, and had worked backwards from the new railway and the

troubles in Macedonia—which had called into service Arab soldiery from all parts of Palestine, and had been the excuse for special taxation—to the Boer War, the Armenian question, and the visit to Palestine of the German Emperor,—the great epoch of the modern history of Syria—the occasion of new buildings, new roads, new uniforms, new trade, and a general cleaning-up along the line of route, with which only the orders issued during the cholera scare of 1903 could in any degree be compared.

With the usual courtesy of the Moslem Oriental, so different from the unabashed curiosity of Europeans and the Europeanised, they withdrew when we made preparations for food, the two or three actually engaged in conversation too important to interrupt, emphasising the occasion for discretion, by throwing stones at others who approached too closely. Some children, many of singular beauty, retired behind a neighbouring wall, and for some time lacked courage to pick up the dainties we threw to them. When we made our final move numbers came up to offer coins, fragments of carving and specimens of carnelian, lapis-lazuli, and crystal. One especial treasure was an abominable bracelet, of the type of art sold at exhibitions, and lost—

to her advantage—by some tourist—not, fortunately, that many tourists visit Sebaste, as was shown by the superior manners of the people and the absence of demand for backsheesh. The village is entirely Moslem, and all behaved with self-respecting dignity, if we except, perhaps, one boy who pulled gently at the Doctor's blond locks, to see if they grew upon his head; and some men who, greatly interested in our spirit-lamps, put a match to the weeds upon which we emptied one before packing, with a childish pleasure in, as he said, "setting fire to water." One of the many cheap conveniences of this country is the fact that one gets an imperial pint of spirits of wine—no miserable "methyated" substitute—for about eightpence; but we have never found it in a Moslem village, where the use of alcohol is, of course, forbidden by religion. With much hesitation and politeness some of the men asked leave to examine a small revolver belonging to one of the party, which excited great admiration, the firearms of the country places being often of a very primitive description, sometimes of such a size that one wonders how they are carried. It is very rare, however, to meet an Arab, beyond the towns, who is not fully armed, even if his weapon be a flintlock six feet

in length. It was a curious conjunction of the new and the old, when Khalil stopped a shepherd one day to ask for a light for his cigarette, a dainty Egyptian, which we had given him. The peasant produced a piece of a table-knife, picked up a flint off the roadside, tore a scrap of blue cotton from his ragged garment, and in an instant Khalil was made happy as only tobacco in any form could make him.

A self-constituted guide dispersed the crowd, and conducted us round the hill, that we might more closely observe the colonnade, some 20 yards wide, and originally over 1800 yards long. All the columns have lost their capitals and architraves, but are still 16 feet high, some being monoliths. Besides, perhaps, over a hundred still standing, columns and fragments of columns are scattered in all directions—a lesson in the history of Tells and the exaltation of the valleys of Palestine. Many were still on the surface of the ground, still more were half buried, of others only the projecting stones of the base remained visible; while here and there the observant, or rather, perhaps, the experienced, eye, could perceive by the contour of the ground that hidden treasure of sculpture lay concealed. The soil is deep, and, for the most part, cultivated;

for the hill of Sebaste is no rocky scarp, and in ten years much of all this will have disappeared. A separate mound, a little away to the west, is said by some to be the site of Ahab's ivory palace, and might repay exploration. Happily, the Germans seem able to obtain firmans at will, having probably inspired confidence, even in a suspicious Government, by the liberality and thoroughness of their excavations.

We longed to linger among so much that was beautiful both in art and nature—the green hill sloping gently to the wooded plain, the hills eight miles away opening towards the west, where the intensely blue waters of the Mediterranean, though distant a score of miles, sparkled gaily in the sunshine. Little wonder that the sun-worshipping peoples should have here erected temples to the great god, whose majesty was shown to them in the smile of the sea and the glory of the sunset! Little wonder that the great Syrian princess, Jezebel, should have rejoiced in the ivory palace looking across to the northern shore she had known in her childhood's home.

One parts so reluctantly from what is beautiful that some of us resented almost angrily a reminder that it was possibly at yonder gateway that the dogs licked up the blood of Ahab; that

on this smiling plain Jezebel slew the prophets of Jehovah ; and Jehu, with still greater brutality, the priests of Baal and the family of the king ; that here also Herod murdered Mariamne, strangled his sons, and, possibly, beheaded John the Baptist.¹

Our last visit was to the hippodrome, lying in a bay of the hill to the north-east—a fine natural position for such a purpose (480 by 60 yards). Many fragments of columns yet remain, apparently belonging to this noble circus, but which some have alleged to belong to a second colonnade at right angles to the first, such as we saw at Jerash. Finally, as we descended to the bottom of the valley to the north-east, we passed another plateau, strewn with massive columns, but a few of which remain upright, probably the forum of the Herodian city, and noted here and there some fine sarcophagi. A ride of four and a half hours was still before us, some of which was over paths of a nature to be traversed, if possible, by daylight, and we might not linger.

¹ Another tradition, more probable, though with less dramatic fitness, places the scene of the execution at Machærus, east of the Dead Sea.

CHAPTER III

TO TAANAK AND MEGIDDO

“Consider with me that the individual existence is a rope which stretches from the infinite to the infinite, and has no end, and no commencement, neither is it capable of being broken. This rope, passing as it does through all places, suffers strange accidents.”

FOR the first fifty minutes our road lay, for the most part, upward, constantly offering glorious views, especially in retrospect, and then, after crossing a green and wooded plateau, we began once more to descend to the north-east, and at the village of Jeba, after passing through a pleasant district, well covered with fruit gardens, found ourselves, about an hour later, once more on the ordinary highroad from Nablûs to Jenin. We looked with interest at the village of Sânu'r, with its ruined fortress, monument to “Some village Hampden that with dauntless breast The petty tyrant of his fields withstood,” some eighty years ago. The petty tyrant was the Pasha of Acre, who besieged, and with difficulty captured, the fortress manned by the independent villagers, whose courage must have impressed the authorities, for they had the cowardice to destroy the fortifica-

tion entirely. A little farther on we rode across a low plain which resembled the bed of a large lake, perfect in islands and peninsulas, and which bore the descriptive name of the Meadow of Sinking In—*Merj-el-Gharak*. Fortunately for us it was fairly dry, and we were able to press forward over its green surface, urged on by “Baedeker,” who assured us of two bad descents which would be trying to the nerves and, what mattered more, the riding powers of the Artist, who was somewhat inexperienced in horsemanship, and, on the theory that December was a cold month, so encumbered with clothing that she had no seat whatever, and who having been unwillingly persuaded to emulate the Lady’s habit of riding *en cavalier* courageously faced difficulties by standing in her stirrups and balancing herself upon the pommels. Of course, the stirrup straps broke at frequent intervals, not having adapted themselves to their new uses; but the accident was soon repaired, and the interval of repose was good for the horse, happily as gentle as a sheep, but who suffered also from the unwonted arrangement.

Fortunately, nothing more serious occurred to detain us as we resisted the temptation to turn aside to inspect Dôtân, probably the Dothan

where poor little Joseph, after passing through Shechem, fell into the hands of the Midianites, who carried him into Egypt. Nablûs, as we have seen, being the only pass through the mountain range of Central Palestine, and Samaria being an open country of good roads, this district must have been the great highway from north to south, from the coast to the Jordan, from Europe and Asia to Africa. It is easy enough to imagine the caravan of Midianites winding southward along yonder ridge, laden with spices for embalming, and visible from far by the sons of Jacob as they sat about the well at the foot of the hill, now crowned with terebinths, and well aware that the travellers would probably turn aside for water. Many ancient, empty, bell-shaped cisterns are to be found in this district such as that into which Joseph was let down.

We surmounted a stony ridge, where the path was in such good condition (not being slippery, as we had feared, after the early rains) as to give us confidence in regard to the worse which was to come, but which, in fact, turned out to be all the better for such dampness as there was, as the horses were less liable to slip on the polished rocks; and, indeed, these creatures are as surefooted as donkeys.

We were glad that the daylight sufficed to show us, as we descended into a narrow valley, before reaching the village of Kubâtîyeh, a sacred tree adorned with rags, standing by the wayside on our right—the first we had seen on our journey, though we afterwards met with many, especially in Galilee.

Such trees exist all over the country, both east and west of the Jordan, except where the presence of Europeans has taught the people to disguise their beliefs, which even then, however, appear in other forms; as, for example, in Jerusalem, where the faithful tie rags to the framework of windows in the mosque and elsewhere, instead of, as here, in the Temple of Nature. The theory of such veneration seems to be much the same as that of the Old Testament saints, who left stones at Bethel, and Ebenezer, on the banks of the Jordan, and so on, “which remain there,” say the chroniclers, “to this day”—evidently indicating that they are a monument to record, a witness to testify, an outward and visible sign to excite inquiry, to serve as evidence of some special visit, to demonstrate to God and man that such an one was there in person, from such and such motives, and with such and such intentions.

The tree itself, with its quaint decorations, torn from the apparel of the faithful, is not always the direct object of veneration. It is often accompanied by a wely or grave of a saint, and though at times the cause of the selection of such a place of interment, is sometimes only the accidental consequence, having grown up beside the tomb; whence it is held to be under the saint's protection, just as other objects—ploughs, timber, grain, and vessels of various kinds—are left there, safe from thieves, Christian or Moslem. Sometimes such a wely is surrounded by a whole grove of trees, which may be sacred for either reason, and may be the cause or effect of the presence of the saint. We always behold them with satisfaction, as assuring the continuance of vegetation here and there, which would otherwise, at least in Judæa, inevitably be destroyed.

Another use of such a spot is for the cure of diseases. This may be by means of self-suggestion, the disease being transferred to the tree with the fragment of the dress of the patient, making much the same demands upon the imagination as the Christian science, the hypnotic suggestion, the bread-pill, of modern therapeutics. Another method of cure—also a question of the

dominance of mind over matter—is that of taking from the tree the morsels attached to it, which are then worn like the scapulars from Lourdes or St Winifred's, just as, long ago, the sick carried from St Paul "handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out." Truly, there is nothing new under the sun! Often, especially on Thursdays, the eve of the Moslem Sabbath, these trees have been seen in flames, which, however, do them no injury, just as Moses saw "the bush which burned and was not consumed." Sometimes voices speak in them, just as David waited for "the sound of the going in the mulberry-trees." Sometimes they are held sacred as having served as resting-place for some holy man, just as the oak of Abraham at Hebron is, as such, still a place of pilgrimage for Christian, Moslem, and Jew.

We could ascertain nothing concerning the history of the sacred tree of Kubâtîyeh; and, indeed, it is but rarely that the people are able to relate the history of their shrines, although their faith in them must be strong, as it suffices, as we have seen, for the protection of articles deposited there for safe-keeping. Men—Christians or Moslems—ready to swear anything by the Almighty, will hesitate at a false oath by the

shrine of a saint. In some places they hang fragments of meat upon the trees, just as the Israelites offered "shewbread," and Jotham talked of "the wine which cheereth God," the anthropomorphic conception of the Deity being nearly as strong now as when the Israelites were still wanderers in the desert. Such ideas are racial rather than religious. Professor Curtiss ("Primitive Semitic Religion To-Day") demonstrates effectively that such beliefs are common to Christians and Moslems and, in places, even to Jews; he mentions, however, one shrine at least which, on account of the more than doubtful character of its orgies, the more fastidious Moslems have abandoned to those of other creeds. Still, as in the time of Hosea, "they sacrifice upon the tops of mountains, and burn incense upon the hills, under oaks and poplars and terebinths, because the shadow thereof is good." The shadow, by the way, has a direct effect of healing upon the really sick, but is dangerous for the *malade imaginaire*. We would commend it to the attention of fashionable physicians.

The discussion of sacred shrines and trees lasted us during our long and steep descent to the bottom of the valley, where the sight of the telegraph wires recalled us to the realities of life,

and it was with great satisfaction that we found ourselves farther descending, through a Moslem cemetery, into the town of Jenin. Here, as elsewhere, we noticed the entire absence of the outskirts and suburbs to which one is used in a different civilisation. One enters directly into a city or village without any intervention of scattered domesticity to indicate what is coming. We were at once in the main street, substantial houses two storeys high on either side of us ; here a large *serai* (court-house), there a gaily-lighted coffee-house thronged with guests ; gardens and palm-trees among the houses ; obvious well-being everywhere. We stopped at the village khan, and were at once conducted to our resting-place.

In old schoolroom days, when we used to read the long lists of places the Israelites conquered or did not conquer, we little thought that one day we should take an active and personal interest even in the order of their arrangement. Issachar, we learn in Joshua xix., had assigned to them sixteen cities, which included En-gannim and Tabor, "and the outgoings of their borders to Jordan," and here, for the first time in our lives, we were not bored by Issachar, and were delighted to be at En-gannim, which is Jenin, and means "the garden spring"—a fact impressed

upon us as we were ushered between long garden borders, hardy herbaceous of aspect, overshadowed by rose-bushes, into two delightful little stone summer-houses at the bottom, with a fountain—now, alas! dry—between. The men took possession of one house, the ladies of the other, and in the latter, as the larger and pleasanter, we pre-prepared our supper. There were mats on the floor, some stools, two chairs, a table with a patchwork cover, and three of the deep window-seats which, in the East, are generally large enough to count as fittings. A clay stove, with glowing charcoal, was prepared for us outside the door, plenty of water was placed at our service, and we were soon feasting on soup, tinned meats, preserves, white bread, and, of course, tea. At intervals servants came across from the khan to attend to our needs; and finally all was cleared away, and comfortable mattresses, pillows, and wadded quilts, all in freshly-washed covers, were spread upon the floor. It may be worth while to mention, once for all, that, despite the presence in our little company of some supersensitive souls, we never had occasion to unpack our precious “Keating.”

To awake in a rose garden on a December morning, to go out of doors to wash, to take our

breakfast at an open door, are sensations to remember. Khalil was late in bringing the horses, ordered for seven o'clock, and so sleepy that we more than suspected he had assisted at the *fantasia*, the sounds of which had reached us far into the night. He was, however, less inclined than usual to resent having to stay behind the rest of the party, in order to lead the Artist's horse, at the pace which alone was possible under the circumstances. It probably gave him the opportunity of a good nap.

Jenin is surrounded by gardens, and dominated by palms and minarets. It is a seat of government, has a bazaar, and two Moslem schools. One of its mosques may have been the church which was seen by Boniface of Ragusa, a Franciscan writer, as late as 1555, erected to commemorate an early tradition that this was the scene of the healing of the ten lepers, one of whom was a Samaritan—a fact, however, which, by the light of nature, one would not expect to be specially mentioned in Samaria.

Passing over a little stream, and among cactus hedges, we soon left the ordinary route northward on our right, not only from our usual desire to avoid the beaten track, but because it was to be our special privilege, under the leadership of

“Baedeker,” to visit two spots practically unknown to ordinary travel—Taanak and Megiddo—at both of which very extensive excavations are in progress, the one under Austrian, the other under German auspices. Very soon after leaving Jenin we had made a still farther descent, and found ourselves at the entrance of the plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel, the greatest in Palestine, which, roughly speaking, extends from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, although interrupted by certain undulations. Esdraelon, the great battlefield of the country, was commanded by a strategical line of fortresses, Taanak, Megiddo, Bethshan, and Dor, the first three of which we hoped to visit.

Our road was, for the most part, just such as one finds in the neighbourhood of an English agricultural village—a well-trodden path between cultivated lands—where, however, among corn already springing green, crocuses, white, yellow, and purple, pink cranes’ bills, and yellow daisies, the weeds of Galilee, turned the whole into the aspect of a garden. Plovers wheeled overhead, rooks followed the ploughs, dainty chats watched us but a few feet away, chiff-chaffs and corn-crakes and starlings and sparrows and skylarks talked English, and only when we passed a sacred tree

hung with rags, or the eye was caught by the colocynth fruit, or by anemones, scarlet, purple, or white, were we reminded that this was Galilee and December, but that, being some two hundred and fifty feet below sea-level, we had no right to feel surprised at hot sunshine and the flora of spring.

The plain widens as we advance, and as here and there some distant spot is pointed out upon the wide horizon, our hearts thrill at the mention of names of lifelong familiarity, glorious in association of the past, but which we realise with difficulty as being before us here and now. Behind us are the hills of Samaria, to our left the country slopes gradually upward into the low hill of *Belad-er-Ruah* (the Breezyland), the wall which separates the plains of Esdraelon and Sharon, hiding the Mediterranean, and ending, far ahead, in the great precipice of Carmel, where we know the blue waters are lapping gently this soft, warm morning. To our right are the hills of Gilboa; while farther, where peninsulas of mountain step out into the plain, we are bidden to look here and there; while the name of Nain, Endor, and, above all, Nazareth, bring before our minds pictures imagined in childhood, and which it may be difficult, though not unwelcome, to supplant.

The great round island of Mount Tabor serves as centre from which to calculate the whereabouts of this place and that.

Our party had been reinforced by the addition of a practical excavator, whose presence was specially valuable to us, not only for his knowledge of the country, but because he had done active work on both of the Tells we were about to visit. We commonly called him "the Italian," although he spoke Italian, German, French, and Arabic with equal facility, and, having been associated with the abandoned English railway, was even capable, at need, of falling back upon English.

At the end of two and a quarter hours we drew up at the foot of Tell Taanak. No one who has even seen a Tell could fail to recognise another wherever he met it, and no one who has not seen one would be quite easily convinced of its nature. In Europe, where, if we destroy a house, we use the material for something else, where we reckon in centuries where the East reckons in cycles, where smoke and damp and frost, to say nothing of utilitarianism, are for ever laying waste, it is difficult to conceive of a city abandoned thousands of years ago, and buried, by the hand of Time, as gently as the Babes in the Wood by

the robin-redbreast. Imagine the city of York (to take as an example one which stands upon a plain) forsaken of its inhabitants, gently dropping to pieces as it stands, and, finally, neatly covered up, in the course of ages, in a grave-shaped mound, leaving plenty of room for the cathedral towers, and grown over with flowers and grass; then suppose that a party of New Zealanders, visitors to Harrogate, about the fortieth century, should make a vertical shaft straight through the middle, and, somewhat disdainful of vestiges so modern as the county capital, should work their way down to Eboracum, and (but here the analogy of the English town ceases) to two or three cities below that. The specialty of the methods of the German excavators is that specimens of all that is met with are, if by any means possible, preserved as the investigation proceeds, so that you may reconstruct for yourself the life of York, as well as of Eboracum, and of any Scandinavian or British predecessors below both.

The contrary method, of destroying one city to arrive at another, and hastily covering up what remains of both, has however, certain advantages, as it enables excavators to dogmatise without possibility of contradiction from succeeding archæologists, and so saves much of that discussion

which, while it establishes knowledge and elicits facts, is a weariness to the amateur public of subscribers and contributors. The German (and, of course, Austrian) excavations are conducted by groups of savants, and not by individuals. Each has his own specialty ; and as there are several of such groups now at work in Palestine each, at need, can be reinforced from elsewhere ; results can be considered from various standpoints, and opinions exchanged. No *ad interim* reports are presented to the public ; the excavators are not obliged to have something to say at stated intervals ; and when the results finally appear they are in a form which leaves nothing to be desired from the point of view of art production. Teutonic thoroughness, frugality, and self-dedication can never be more admirably exhibited than in the prosecution of knowledge in this form ; and the German expenditure, as compared with the result, is, in Palestine, as surprising in scientific research, as in their philanthropic institutions.

We rode as far as a terrace more than half way up, and then dismounting were soon absorbed in the excavation, on our own account, of a rubbish heap close by, where we filled our pockets with fragments of painted pottery and iridescent glass, with jar handles and broken lamps. "That is

Cypriote," "that Phœnician," "that pre-Amoritic," "that merely Arabic," pronounced our experts. "Merely Arabic" might be earlier than the foundation of Westminster Abbey, or the days of Charlemagne, but we were willing to hold it cheap when we could have for the stooping, let us say, the fragment of a water-bottle, still fresh as to its ornamentation, pleasing as to its colouring, which had long been buried when the nomadic tribes of the Israelites first settled in Canaan; or a lamp which may have burned when "fought the kings of Canaan in Taanak by the waters of Megiddo"—celebrated in the savage war-song of Deborah the prophetess, which, in its geographical allusions, is a mine of wealth to the archæologist.

Exploring a Tell must be wonderfully exciting work, even when one has rewards less immediate than the results at Taanak, which is the first Canaanite site ever excavated. Think of finding oneself face to face with the remains of the infants offered up on yonder rock-cut altar—jars and jars full of the bones of poor little Canaanitish babies who might otherwise have lived to play with the little Manassehites who came to settle among them, whose fathers could not drive out the people of Taanak from their own stronghold. Or imagine the sensation of finding, two

metres deep under the soil, the only Israelitish altar of incense ever discovered! Although broken into forty pieces, Dr Sellin contrived to put it together, when it was found to be exactly in accordance with the prescribed Mosaic measurements, decorated with rams' horns, with carvings of six cherubs and four lions, and with representations of the Tree of Life and the struggle of a man with the serpent. Dr Sellin ascribes it to the period when the Samaritan influence was strong in Israelitish worship, and thinks it may be as late as from five hundred to one hundred years before Christ. It is to be observed, however, that the German specialists hesitate to claim the very remote periods assigned by other excavators to similar discoveries, often differing from them by as much as a thousand years.

Here we came across the massive wall of a Canaanitish building of a period some eighteen hundred years before Christ; there what was possibly the house of Baana, the governor of the fortress in the time of Solomon; here an Arabian castle of the times of Haroun-er-Raschid; here was found an image of Baal, there of Astarte, here a head of Jahwe, the god of whom it was forbidden to make any graven image. The variety of the commercial relations of Taanak is

shown by Mykenæan pottery from the Ægean, scarabs from Egypt, seal cylinders from Babylon. Four thousand years at least passed in review before us as we clambered among the ruins ; we ran down an inclined plane into a city which was ancient when the child Joseph passed under its walls, a trembling little slave, on his way down from Dothan into Egypt ; or, perching on a staircase, looked into the homes of those citizens whom Joshua failed to subdue. Here we mount a few steps, and find ourselves in the fortress which guarded the plain when Israel and Sisera were struggling on the banks of the Kishon ; or, wandering outside, we rest beneath the city walls

“Graven with emblems of the time,
In honour of the golden prime
Of good Haroun Alraschid.”

No story of the Arabian Nights which may have been related here could have for us half the glamour, the enchantment, of those we may make for ourselves here and now. A fragment of iridescent glass, of an ivory handle, of a water-jar—here are charms enough to weave the magic spell ! And here, to exorcise all, comes the rain, and we find ourselves again amid the petty cares of to-day, and hasten back to the terrace where our horses are patiently waiting.

We were quite ready to accept the alleged Megiddo as such, on the authority, among others, of Robinson among older geographers, and of Professor G. A. Smith among the new, and, perhaps still more, of those who had turned the site, as well as the question, inside out.

Tell el - Mutesellim lies just beyond Lejjun, which corresponds with the Legio of Eusebius. The great plain is called by St Jerome by the name of Campus Legionis, as well as the plain of Megiddo. "The waters of Megiddo," of which we read in Judges, are represented by the abundant streams, tributaries of the Kishon, which the Arabs call the Muqutta. At Lejjun one at once observes a very fine aqueduct, and a large mill, both Roman, and some tentative excavation, which promises good results later, has revealed a theatre and some bricks stamped with the cognisance of the sixth legion. Megiddo and Taanak are always named together in Bible history, and we learn that both were fortified towns before the Israelitish occupation; that the tribe of Manasseh failed to drive out the inhabitants; that Solomon fortified Megiddo; and that two kings of Judah—Ahaziah and Josiah—died there, far from their own royal city—a fact which testifies to its continued consequence.

Excavation at Tell el-Mutesellim has revealed a strongly-fortified city of obvious importance, which seems to fulfil all required conditions. Conder, however, identifies Megiddo with a distant town near the Jordan, far from Taanak, the Kishon, and the great plain, which there was no particular reason for fortifying, but which is called Mujedda, which sounds rather like Megiddo.

We reached Lejjun in bright sunshine about an hour after leaving Taanak, and Tell el-Mutesellim rises somewhat abruptly beyond. On an intervening hill, separated from the Tell by a narrow valley, stands a row of corrugated-iron huts, neatly lined with wood, surmounted by the German flag, and bearing the familiar legend, "Thames Iron Works," another reminder that the abandoned English railway, making such rapid progress but a few miles away, must henceforth be put to the credit of Turkish finance and German perseverance.

One large hut served as reception-room, and later as bedroom for the ladies, a second as storeroom and bedroom for the men, and a third was divided into stable, kitchen, and sleeping-place for the servants. A drawing-room was arranged for us in the open air, where deck-chairs

were placed so as to be sheltered by huts on both sides, with a glorious view over the Tell beyond to Carmel, Tabor, and the mountains of Gilboa ; while the fertile plain stretched like a great sea all around, and behind us we could look over Lejjun, in the near distance, to our old friends the hills east of the Jordan.

“ Baedeker ” and the Italian had been greeted by half the inhabitants of the district, all old friends and co-workers in the excavation of the Tell, glad just now of a vacation, which gave them leisure to cultivate their fields, but quite ready to return to the work promised them in a few weeks. We met a man with a gun, who had wandered far, in vain, in search of game for our table, and another who mourned that only a couple of eggs had been forthcoming when our somewhat sudden arrival was announced ; but the cook, *pro tem*, was in good spirits at having at an early hour secured five chickens, which had been simmering ever since. One of the Arab's many virtues is that his soups are strong and he never gives you underdone meat. If this were true at lunch it was still more so at dinner, after seven hours' additional cooking, and the liberal allowance of material, all served in the same *pot-à-feu*, gave everyone the chance to

select his favourite portion. The Italian, who had made a shorter journey than we, had brought us some extra luxuries, and we found ourselves in very comfortable quarters.

After luncheon we visited the Tell, and, with plenty of time before us, enjoyed a detailed inspection, and the opportunity of pausing, wherever we felt disposed, for discussion and examination. The amount of excavation already accomplished was just enough, like the index of an interesting book, to indicate what might be expected, and to rouse, without exhausting, our interest. Here we were shown what seemed an extraordinary extent of surface excavated in proportion to the short period — about four months — of work. “Baedeker” had himself had charge of the work, with the Italian as foreman, and so we were able to follow in detail the plan of operation, and to learn how to dissect a Tell. They had begun at the eastern edge because, as it was the highest point, they expected to find an acropolis, as was, in fact, the case. The city to which it belonged had, apparently, been destroyed by fire, as the great beams which served as supports were considerably charred. The fortress, of Jewish workmanship, was built of great stones, but the buttresses were of brick. There was an outer

wall, and an aqueduct of later, but also of Jewish, construction.

We were even more interested in a temple of pagan cult, where, not in the open air, as usual, but inside a square chamber, were found a rock-cut altar, and on either side a mazeba, or stone pillar, such as Solomon set up before the Temple, with the names of Jachin and Boaz, and such as, under the name of menhirs, we find in Scotland and the west of England, and, in fact, all over the world—relics of a cult associated with the most elementary principles of nature worship. In horribly suggestive proximity were sacrificial jars containing the bones of infants, head downwards.

South of the walls of the fort were many small rooms, possibly barracks; while a tomb near was crowded with the bodies of men, and in another tomb were found ten skulls, of which many showed cuts or holes, evidently relics of a siege. One incomplete shaft, but a few feet wide and seventeen metres deep, not yet reaching rock, showed us the method of beginning operations. Here we could see sections of a wall of unburnt brick, and of two others of unhewn stone, and we longed to return to see these indications followed up. Among the most precious portable finds were an idol and a terra-cotta head, prob-

ably Egyptian, a seal with letters in an unknown script, a bowl for libations, a painted censer, and several enamelled gods. Shortly before our arrival, during the last days of work before pausing for the winter rains, some large tombs had been opened, and found to contain some beautiful and unique painted jars, as well as other jars, bowls, and lamps in large quantities. No description of these excavations had as yet been published, and we thought ourselves very fortunate in being able to study and inquire at first hand. It is almost equally interesting to listen to an explanation of work accomplished, and to speculate as to the results of work only begun.

After dinner we were tempted by the notion of visiting these cities of the dead by moonlight, and were well repaid for the effort of crossing the rough ground of the intervening valley. There were no sensuous triumphs of Greek or Roman art, no glories of column and capital, but, perhaps still more impressive, the homes of peoples who had passed away when Greece and Rome were yet unborn. Here were streets trodden by men of like passions with ourselves : hastening to business or pleasure, meeting their brides or burying their dead. Here were

chambers in which the drama of life had been played out over and over again—comedy as well as tragedy, birth and death; here the altars where vows had been fulfilled and the gods propitiated; gardens sanctified by the games of children, the laughter of youth; where ambitions, hopes, affections had been born—to die, or to live for ever. All around us spoke of the eternity of all but man—the stars, the hills, the flowers which return to us year by year—Carmel outliving its tragedies, Tabor its miracles; beyond the hills that ancient river, the River Kishon, hastening to the eternal sea. Man alone had passed away, leaving only the wreck of his labour, the ruin of his homes, to show where he had been. But yet another thought came to us. In a fold of yonder hills, where the moonlight rested tenderly, lay the little village of Nazareth, where long ago there dwelt a Man who

“Wrought
With human hands the creed of creeds
In loveliness of perfect deeds,
More strong than all poetic thought.”

We carried our discussion no further. Surely here, as in that little village, had been men into whose lives had entered the beautiful and the

true—which, in proportion as they resembled the life of that Man of Nazareth, must endure for ever.

It was the last night of the old year, and in each heart were memories and longings which might not be revealed. We walked back through the soft night air, each thinking of friends far away, gathered about winter fires, and speculating, perhaps, as to the whereabouts of their wanderers. When we had once more assembled in our friendly hut, and, thanks to “Baedeker’s” kindly forethought, had drunk together of an excellent punch of tea and red wine, with a dash of kirsch-wasser, we felt constrained to go forth once more into the wide space beyond. Not a solitary light twinkled on the hillside; the village of Lejjun was sleeping: we were the centre of our world. The horses were tethered before our doors, and we were amused to observe that the force of habit persisted even in sleep, and that, so used were they to travelling *en queue* that, even in repose, they stood in a single row, head to tail.

“The shadows flicker to and fro :
The cricket chirps : the light burns low,—
'Tis nearly twelve o'clock.

Shake hands before you die,
Old year, we'll dearly rue for you.
What is it we can do for you?
Speak out before you die!"

Each of us had our special regret as we stood beside that grave, each our special hopes as, only a few minutes later, we greeted the stranger guest and wished each other A Happy New Year!

CHAPTER IV

HAIFA AND CARMEL

“Traversing this fertile country one is more and more impressed with the incorrectness of the judgment of the ordinary tourist who, confining himself to the route prescribed by Cook, is taken through the barren hills of Judæa and to one or two holy places in Galilee, and then goes home and talks about the waste and desolation of Palestine.”—LAURENCE OLIPHANT

THE early hours of the next morning were devoted to sketching and photography, and after a midday lunch we mounted for a ride, of some nine hours, to Haifa. We soon found ourselves back in the plain, with the great precipice of Carmel before us for our goal. The general features of the country were the same as yesterday, except that we had the River Kishon for our companion. Even the slight amount of rain which had fallen had had its effect here, and the road in parts was heavy enough to disconcert the horses, who picked their way as daintily as if they remembered nothing of the fact that it had rained, with considerable mud as a result, even in their own royal city of Jerusalem, only nine months ago. We could not wonder,

however, that the River Kishon should have swept away the hosts of Sisera, for on ground such as this the horse - hoofs might well be "broken by means of the prancings," and nine hundred chariots of iron, hemmed in between the river and the steep hillside, would have a very poor chance, especially in the rainy season, which one may imagine it to have been, as Jael, whom one thinks of as of the Medici, or the knitting-women of the Fronde, "brought forth butter in a lordly dish"; and butter, except at a prohibitive price, at a convent or two in Jerusalem, is not to be had in the summer months. Surely so vile a woman was never celebrated in song!

The flowers were an endless feast; never had we seen anemones of so many shades, and perhaps the greatest event of the day was the finding of the first jonquils, *narcissus tazetta*. We had been watching their deep green homes for the last three days, but this was the first time we had been rewarded. Both the Doctors contrived to possess themselves, upon an island in the river, although with some difficulty, of a great handful of the sweet-smelling blooms, the firstlings of our New Year's Day. A few minutes later we came to a couple of bridges,

one for the railway and one for the road, and from that point we were more or less in sight of the railway all the time. Some of the horses made a great fuss about the passing of a train, for, although the line is not yet formally open for passenger traffic, a train runs every day in each direction for the convenience of the engineers. Just at sunset, after about eight hours' travelling, we came in view of the lights of Haifa, twinkling along the shore, with only the palms and minarets to dispel the illusion that it might be Brighton or Hastings. Carmel was before us, the great landmark of the Palestine coast, boldly leaping out into the sea, its lighthouse throwing out a friendly welcome, rather, perhaps, than a warning, to those who go down to the sea in ships. This is the one spot on all the Syrian coast remotely resembling a harbour; elsewhere are only ledges for sea-birds, rocks inviting to wreckage, and Nile sand brought up by the currents flowing north. The Phœnicians, of whom alone among all the inhabitants of Syria we can think as a seafaring people, traded from farther north. Little wonder that the people of such a land should welcome the promise, so strange to other ears: "There shall be no more sea!" For many months in the year the in-

habitants of Judæa can count on letters only "if they can land at Jaffa," and constantly, even when mail-bags can be tossed into the small boats, which alone can come ashore, passengers are carried past, northward to Beirut, or south to Egypt, to make a fresh attempt, often two or three times repeated; and every year has its record of drowning and disaster.

Sir John Maundeville, who is never at a loss to account for anything that comes in his way, gravely assures us that there was here formerly "a good city of the Christians called Caiphas, because Caiaphas first founded it." The town of Haifa (the Arabic name being variously transliterated Haifa and Caifa) is the old Sycaminum; the modern town, however, stands farther within the bay than the old, the ruins of which are still visible at the foot of Mount Carmel. It was built in the middle of the eighteenth century by Dhaher, a famous governor of the neighbouring Acre or Akko, which is the old Ptolemais.

Our quarters at Haifa were at the farther end of the town, and after passing through streets which, though better than in many places, are decidedly Oriental as to width, paving, and dirt, it was reposeful to find ourselves in the German colony—a picturesque European village: wide

streets planted with trees, well-kept roads, gardens gay with flowers, and houses which seem to have been transported from some quaint, old country town, each with its text in "black letter" over the door. One, above all others, was to some among us almost a place of pilgrimage, with all its associations of a man of genius unappreciated, misunderstood—one of the many messengers who, with hands laden with gifts, sought to come unto his own, and his own received him not!

**Wohl denen, die das Gebot halten und
thun immerdar Recht.**

Hans Oliphant.

Not England, and not America, carry on his work of—literally—sweetness and light, but the Germans. Haifa is practically a German town so far as its trade, agriculture, and property are concerned. Even the Russian, American, and, till lately, the English consuls are Germans, and most officials, of whatever nationality, reside in the colony. The hotels, shops, and banks are German. The Roman Catholic hospital and hospice are in the hands of a German sisterhood; the sanatorium on Mount Carmel, with its luxurious accommodation and extensive grounds,

rendezvous of English missionaries, is conducted by Germans.

The Scottish medical mission, here as elsewhere preaching the Gospel of good deeds, has an admirable hospital. *The Jerusalem and the East Mission* has a chaplain. The great hospice on Mount Carmel is maintained by the Carmelite Fathers. Out of 12,000 inhabitants half are Moslems, sixteen hundred Jews, and about a thousand Greek, Orthodox, and Latins. Of the six hundred Europeans, five hundred are Germans; the rest of the population is mainly Maronite and Greek Catholic.

Plain living and high thinking are, of course, the ideal of life, but there is a joy in unpacking, in a hot bath, in a white table-cloth. Our companions at table were mainly German engineers and contractors, at work on the new railway. We regretted that we were too late to see the opening ceremony of a few days before, which seems to have presented some interesting features, and was certainly a triumph for the Turkish Government. In spite of its execution having been German—for even when in English hands its surveyor was Dr Schumacher, the German-American Vice-Consul—the Moslem ownership of the railway has not been lost sight of, and

it is an interesting anomaly that its inauguration was accompanied by the sacrifice of several sheep. Their throats were cut, the blood poured upon the soil, and the flesh roasted and given to the poor. This is done "for a blessing." How far this savage ceremony is a perpetuation of the Old Testament idea of propitiating the Deity, how far it is done to avert the attention of the *jinn*, it is impossible to say. Similar ceremonies are performed, both by Moslems and Christians, at the initiation of any undertaking,¹ from the opening of public works to the building of a dwelling-house, the anointing with blood being a necessary element.

To our great regret we were now to lose our friend "Baedeker," to whom we owed so much of pleasure and information. We had given him, in return, much valuable advice on how to construct a guide-book, framed on the analogy of certain specimens beloved of tourists, from which we had culled choice extracts for frequent quotation, the general principles of which seemed to be hasty generalisation and the inculcation of moral lessons. We may incidentally mention that the longer and better one knows Syria the more one learns to ap-

¹ Curtiss, *op. cit.* Chap. xiv.

preciate the blessings of Baedeker, and to value its extreme accuracy, even in the smallest particulars.

We devoted the next day to renewing our stock of provisions at the excellent shops, visiting friends, and, finally, to a ride up Mount Carmel. Last year an Austrian boat, the *Posseidon*, came ashore in this very treacherous harbour, and among other passengers rescued from the wreck were a cat and kittens, belonging to the son of the captain. These kittens found a kindly welcome among the German population, and in two houses were introduced to our notice with much pride. They were evidently accustomed to attention, for their self-esteem exceeded that of even other cats "subject to vanity," and their Angora lineage, short faces, tufted ears, bushy tails, and black toes justified their claim to admiration. The Arab cat leaves little to be desired as to pelage, but, as a rule, his markings, black on white, would disgrace a fox-terrier. He is, for the most part, well treated in Palestine, and, in consequence, extremely intelligent; but, like the Arabs themselves, and the Arab donkeys, is too much *en evidence* for perfect good breeding, and his "flashes of silence" are very occasional, and generally due to sleep or food.

The ride up Mount Carmel was an occasion never to be forgotten. The new carriage road climbs the four hundred and eighty feet which lead to the convent in wide sweeps, and is very easy; but the direct ascent is abrupt, and the views proportionately impressive. Northward, the crescent-shaped bay terminated in Acre, with all its associations of crusading times; while far below us Haifa, and all its gardens, offered, perhaps, the most smiling and prosperous picture which Palestine had ever shown us. The detached houses, buried in trees; the unwonted completeness and order of the cultivation; the miles of terraced vineyards, parents of the excellent Haifa wine; the picturesque German colony; the estates of Selim Effendi Khuri—the millionaire of a district in which are many rich men, mainly Germans; the orange and lemon gardens, with their wealth of fruit, here a flame of bougainvillea, there a bower of fragrant jessamine, at intervals a group of stately palms—where else can we find a prospect such as this?

And then, when we reached the top, was there ever such a rock garden as extends for miles along the summit of Carmel, the mountain which travellers abuse, and for which guide-books apologise? Did ever a January sky shine over

a more marvellous wealth of beauty and of promise? Rocks of limestone and hornstone ; a general effect of greenness, kept fresh at all times of the year owing to the neighbourhood of the sea and the constant dews ; scattered shade of sapling oaks, of carobs, hawthorns, elders, Guelder-roses, pomegranates, acacias, almonds now laden with bloom, arbutus, and tamarisks ; an undergrowth of azalea, genista, rock-rose, juniper, a tangle of the glorious clematis *cirrrosa*, with its delicate greenish blossom ; myrtles, and “the slender galingale” ; ferns in every shady nook—the *felis-mas*, *asplenium-trichomanes*, the scented fern ; *cheilanthes-fragrans*, the waving maiden-hair—a feast of colour and sweetness ; cyclamen, crimson, pink, and white ; hyacinths, blue ; chrysanthemums, golden ; mandrakes, royal purple ; periwinkle, sapphire ; anemone *coronaria*, scarlet, purple, pink, white ; the stately narcissus and sweet jonquils ; crocuses, golden, purple, and white. And then the promise ! How we longed to wait a week or two, as we watched the strong green swords of the bulbous and tuberous plants preparing to defend their coming treasure ; the irises, great and small ; the gladioli, the squills, the star of Bethlehem, the hyacinths, the arums, the orchises. Soon, too, there would be adonis,

red and yellow ; scarlet ranunculus, chrysanthemums, and later, asphodels, lupins, scented stocks, lychnis, geraniums of many kinds, centaureas, valerian and a hundred other blooms, which had sent no word of their coming, and at which we could only guess. To catalogue only seems a sort of profanation.

“I touch,
But cannot praise ; I love too much.”

There, for the first time, we saw the beautiful little sun-bird, although it is said to be common in the Jericho district. To the uninstructed it is a humming-bird, although one is assured that they exist only in the New World. It is little over four inches long, radiantly attired in purple, green, and blue, with brilliant orange tufts upon his shoulders, a wonderful metallic sheen over all, and a long, curved bill. The little lady who accompanies him, though far more humbly dressed, is also dainty and fascinating in brown shot with green. Another tiny bird which gave us much delight was the long-tailed wren, *drymæca gracilis*, which runs up tamarisk-trees like a tit, with a little fan spread open behind it.

The scene gave a new meaning to familiar words : “ The desert shall rejoice, and blossom as the rose. It shall blossom abundantly : the glory

of Lebanon shall be given unto it, the excellency of Carmel and Sharon." The flowers of Lebanon and Sharon are also a joy and delight to the beauty-loving eye, but to our fancy the excellency of Carmel is supreme. The mountain at its highest point is less than two thousand feet, but, rising sheer from the sea, is more imposing than many mountains of greater elevation. The entire length of the range does not exceed fifteen miles; but as only two villages, occupied mainly by Druses and Greek Catholics, occur to break its solitude, wild beasts—jackals, hyænas, wild boars, and even occasional panthers—are still more or less in possession, although the cultivation of vines for the famous Haifa vintage, has carried civilisation and humanity to a considerable distance.

Of course, we visited the convent, with all its hospitalities and its interesting historical associations: its memories of pious anchorites, of their union, in the fifth century, with one of the earliest religious orders; of the Benedictines who, early in the ninth century, built the Church of St Margaret; of St Louis; of massacres which laid desolate the convent; of the church turned into a mosque; and finally of the restoration of the order, with permission to rebuild. The

monastery was used as a hospital when Napoleon besieged Acre, and the wounded, murdered by the Turks, lie under a small pyramid in the convent garden. Destroyed once more by the Pasha of Acre in 1821, the buildings have been again restored on a scale to accommodate the large pilgrimages which come every year from Europe. Even more humble pilgrims, natives or Hindoos—for “the grotto of Elijah” and the “school of the prophets” are venerated also by Moslems—are not forgotten, and a special building is provided for them at the base of the lighthouse, which is under the care of the monastery. It is said that an Italian, Brother Giovanni of Frascati, is the real author of the reconstruction of the Carmelite prosperity, for, sent by the general of the order to inquire into the condition of things, he found only wrecked walls, and, as sole survivor of the order, a single brother, who had taken refuge in Haifa. A firman was obtained from Constantinople, and the two brothers devoted themselves to the collection of funds, with such results that in 1827, six years after its destruction, a new foundation stone was laid by Giovanni himself. Liberal gifts must have followed, for, though severe in style, the buildings are very spacious and solid, and include

a good library, very handsome church, oratory, and chapter-house.

A small chamber, little more than a cave, said to have been the habitation of the three poor Carmelites who inaugurated the return of the order in 1636, has been recently converted into a chapel dedicated to St Simon Stock, the Kentishman who was general of the order in Palestine in 1245.

We lingered to see the sunset clouds gather above the Mediterranean, and then rode over the top of the ridge, and so back to the town, almost grudging to go indoors as the stars sprang out and the red roofs and green palms and olives of the German village faded away into greys and purples. After dinner we had the privilege of examining Dr Schumacher's precious little museum at the American consulate, and of seeing the map of his survey of the East Jordanland, the first that has yet been completed.

CHAPTER V

NAZARETH AND TABOR

“From thence men go to Nazareth, of which our Lord beareth the surname . . . because our Lady was born at Nazareth, therefore our Lord bare His surname of that town.”

SIR JOHN MAUNDEVILLE, 1322

“Mount Tabor in Galilee . . . is of a remarkably round shape, and covered in an extraordinary manner with grass and flowers.”

ARCULF, 700 A.D.

OUR departure next morning—our little party reduced to three and one mukari—was somewhat delayed by the conduct of Sadowi, who, brought up in Moslem surroundings, firmly protested against being ridden past a pig in the streets of Haifa. If it had been a lion he could not have objected more strongly, and as the movement of a pig is not rapid our progress, for the length of an entire street, was a work of time. We were bound for Nazareth, only some twenty-four miles distant, along a fairly good road, but this was, on the whole, the most wearisome day of our journey. A chain is no stronger than its weakest link; Khalil had to lead the Artist's horse at a walk, our second servant had gone,

and even if we had known the way, or if it had seemed prudent to divide our forces, our horses had no confidence in Frenjy, and so firmly refused to separate from their stable companions—human and equine—that, after disputing the question with them until we were tired, we abandoned ourselves to the dragging pace which is so wearing to horse and rider, and which protracted our journey till late in the afternoon.

Descending after three miles into the fertile plain of the Kishon we retraced our road towards Megiddo for some miles, and then climbed to higher ground, and passed through a succession of beautiful groves of oak, very rare in this country, and which, we regretted to see, had been partially destroyed in the construction of the new carriage road from Haifa to Tiberias. Once more descending we reached, about fifteen miles from Haifa, the village of Semûniyeh, historically interesting as being the first settlement in Palestine of the German Society of Templars, who have done so much for commerce and agriculture, and have demonstrated, as no other Europeans have done, by their well-built, well-arranged colonies, the fact that it is possible to live a domestic life under conditions of order, beauty, and sanitation even in Palestine. This

first site, however promising and pleasing to the eye, was not, however, well chosen, for the spring, bordered with flowers and shaded with maiden-hair, turned out to be very unwholesome. We passed, just below, the little village of Yâfâ, where since 1641 the Franciscans have possessed a small chapel, on the alleged site of the house of Zebedee. The villagers are mainly Latins and Greek Orthodox.

The town of Nazareth is so buried in a cleft of the hills that it came into sight quite suddenly, lying to the left of the road, with a few separated buildings, mostly modern institutions, the most striking of which is the immense orphanage of the Salesian Fathers, with its long arcades and its exalted position. A convent of Poor Clares is the only building noticeable to the right of the road; on the left we pass a pleasant-looking hotel (German) and some half-dozen houses, and we are at the gates of the Franciscan hospice, a handsome building, capable of accommodating over two hundred guests, with spacious reception-rooms and every modern convenience, built mainly by the liberality of Americans, and known, in consequence, as *Notre Dame d'Amerique*. Its hospitality, like that of all the Franciscan hospices, is open to all, rich and poor, irrespective

of sex, creed, or nationality. Guests are at liberty to leave a gift for the maintenance of the house; but nothing is asked, and the Lady related several instances, personally known to her, in which it had been declined owing to the circumstances, known or suspected, of the visitor.

One's emotions on finding oneself in Nazareth are, like so many of the most sacred things in life, "nothing to speak of." Easier is it to dwell upon our hearty welcome and kindly companionship, upon the refreshment of comfortable rooms and an excellent table, upon the unattractiveness of the modern town and the superfluous philanthropy and multiplication of benevolent institutions.

After "the cup that cheers," and which a Franciscan hospice anywhere in Palestine may be warranted to produce at sight of an Englishwoman, we wandered forth, rather rashly, in the twilight. The Lady alleged that the ground-plan of the town could only be compared with Clovelly—each house looks down the next-door chimneys, or would if chimneys there were. The streets appeared to be about nine feet wide. On either side is a pavement wide enough for one person; the middle is a water-course, a

drain, or a depository for decaying vegetable matter according to the character of the quarter. If you meet a donkey your conversation with your companion across the street is interrupted till it has clattered past ; if it is loaded you flatten yourself against the wall ; if you meet a camel you step inside the nearest house. The people have the manners of those accustomed to tourists and to superfluously benevolent institutions : the women stare boldly, the children demand backsheesh, the men have lost the Oriental courtesy so welcome in less frequented places.

The population is about ten thousand, of whom thirty-five hundred are Moslems, and thirty-five hundred Greeks ; about twenty-eight hundred Catholics, Latin, Greek, and Maronite, and about two hundred and fifty Protestants. The people are prosperous, mainly as agriculturists, but there is also some commerce in cotton and grain.

The Franciscans, besides their own college for novices, have a school for boys ; the Salesians an orphanage for boys ; the Christian Brothers a school for boys, with higher grade as well as elementary teaching ; the Dames de Nazareth an orphanage and school for girls ; the Sisters of

St Joseph a school for girls and a dispensary ; the Brothers of St John the Divine a hospital and dispensary ; the Sisters of Charity all the miscellaneous works of care for young and old, for homeless and infirm, with which everywhere they fill up the gaps left by others. The Greeks, Russians, Maronites—all have their own institutions ; the Russians a very large hospice for pilgrims. The Edinburgh Medical Mission has a church and hospital, and the English have a small orphanage for girls, founded by the Society for Female Education, which, despite its unattractive title, has done some excellent work in Palestine. How, out of a Christian population of about three thousand (exclusive of Greek Orthodox, and in a well-to-do town), enough material is collected to furnish occupation to so many societies, and the means of spending so much money as is here represented, is beyond the understanding of the mere layman !

Darkness fell suddenly, and in the narrow, unlighted streets we—to our own self-contempt at so unusual a circumstance—lost our way, got mixed with a long train of camels which, whether standing or sitting, barricaded our steps in all directions, and were finally rescued by a lad speaking very good French, who lifted the Lady

bodily over pack-saddles and humps of camels, drove her under arches formed by the front and hind legs of camels, held aside for her the investigating muzzles of camels, defended her from the hind legs of camels, and finally, to her great surprise, delivered her safe at the convent door, and disappeared into the dark.

Next day we visited all the traditional sites, known by description to all the world. The great Church of the Annunciation, rich with costly gifts of marbles, and silver, and pictures, on the site of that built by Constantine, is the parish church of the Franciscans. The present building is not older than the beginning of the eighteenth century; its immediate predecessor having been burnt and pillaged by the Bedu from beyond the Jordan. A very simple chapel covers a part of the foundations, still visible, of a crusading church, on ground bought by the Franciscans a hundred and fifty years ago, and which they hope some day to restore. The time-worn arches, the fragments of masonry standing silent and solitary in a walled garden, among well-ordered flower-beds—the tradition that this was the site of the workshop of Joseph, the village carpenter, impressed us more than all the wealth, the multiplied legends of the

handsome Church of the Annunciation.¹ The Franciscans have also a chapel covering the rock said to be the scene of one of the occasions when our Lord, after His resurrection, was known in the breaking of bread. The Greek Catholics are in possession of the church which is associated with the synagogue in which Jesus is said to have preached, and from which He was cast out; the Greek Orthodox of a chapel which covers one of the springs of the village well. Here, as in many other places where only one well exists, we may feel certain of at least one scene of many sacred associations.

Later in the day the Lady and the Doctor rode up to the top of one of the many hills, which stand out like islands or peninsulas in the plain, and from which, but a mile or two beyond the village, one has a view which is an epitome of Old and New Testament history. It is said that one may see thirty miles in three directions: east to the valley of the Jordan and the hills of Gilead beyond, west to the Mediterranean, and in the nearer foreground one may look

¹ "English readers may be interested to know that it was by the intercession of the Bishop of Salisbury that Salah ed-din in 1192 permitted the restoration of divine worship in this church. The bishop himself selected the priests and deacons for this office. —MICHAUD, "Croisades" II. p. 724.

upon the battlefields of Esdraelon, on Carmel and Tabor, on the scenes of the history of Elijah, Barak, Gideon, of the death of Saul, of the struggles of the Maccabees, of the life of Jesus of Nazareth.

Here, once more, one cannot fail to be struck by the falsity of conventional teaching. No meditation on the boyhood of Jesus is complete without its paragraph as to the obscurity of His home, the remoteness of this Galilean village, its aloofness from the life and history of the times. The very phrase "Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?" is taken in support of its insignificance, instead of evidence of the well-known character for turbulence of its inhabitants—a character said, by those in political authority, to be still prominent to-day.

Apart, however, from the stimulus of its surrounding scenery it is obvious to the most elementary student that Nazareth was very little removed from the most crowded highway, from the centre of the busiest life of Palestine; that—to speak it with reverence—an intelligent boy, wandering about the neighbourhood as boys will, would bring in every day news of all the activities, the competitions, the commerce, the politics of the times. Midianite caravans mak-

ing their way to the fords of the Jordan would tell of all the wealth and learning of Egypt, and reflect somewhat of its contact with Europe ; Damascus caravans coming south or returning home from trading expeditions ; pilgrims going up to Jerusalem to the feasts, and bringing back news of the capital, the *rendezvous* of all Jewry ; lords and princes with their retinues travelling from the Greek cities of the Decapolis to the Greek city of Tiberias, but a few hours distant ; Roman legions marching south ; luxurious ladies going down to winter among the palm gardens of Jericho ; learned men travelling from one city to another ; peripatetic teachers as the fashion was ; Herod and his Court removing from Tiberias to Sebaste, to Jericho, to Jerusalem—all such spectacles would be of daily occurrence, a part of that human training which made the Master, perfect Man ; which taught Him sympathy not only with those who frequented the carpenter's workshop and the fisherman's hut, but with a learning, a civilisation, a life, which brings Him nearer to us and to our own temptations and interests than some would have us think ; which made it necessary that His teachings should be represented not only by the Synoptic gospels but

by the author of the fourth gospel, by the Epistle to the Hebrews, by the philosophy of St Paul.

Looking down from our elevation at a scene which showed the ploughman with his yoke, the sower with his basket, the busy little town, the many schools, hospitals, orphanages ; the hospitalities of the Franciscans and the Russians, frequented, later in the year, by persons of every class and nationality ; the buildings in progress, the vehicles and laden beasts travelling seawards to Haifa, in touch with all the commerce of the age, we turned for one moment to the convent of Poor Clares at our feet, with the passing thought that asceticism, inactivity, contemplation such as this, was an anomaly compared not only with our own life but with that of Him whom they would serve.

The Artist's horse required an off day or two, and the roads were in such good condition that it was arranged that the Artist should follow in a carriage, as the rest of the party had a long day in prospect. The Church of the Annunciation had been crowded every evening with village people, singing special litanies, and praying for rain. "I thought of your long ride, and prayed with mixed feelings," said a kindly

Father ; “but the majority are against you, and you had better make the most of the time. I saw ‘as it were a man’s hand’ over Carmel!”

Accordingly we set off at twilight next morning, and saw the sun rise over the hills of Galilee. The little town had not yet awakened to life, and not a single woman waited with her pitcher at the well which yesterday had been a scene of so much activity. We had planned to visit the Austrian hospital, where so much science and surgical skill are devoted to the poor by the Brothers of St John the Divine, but the early start and a change in our route made this impossible. The country hereabouts is not in itself interesting, except for the beauty of colouring, which is never wanting in Palestine, and for the associations of which we were everywhere reminded. We looked back at the Mount of Precipitation, with its sheer precipice of 1000 feet, at the range of Carmel, at Tabor and Hermon, at the wide plain to the south and the rising ground beyond, where, in Nain and Endor and Shunem, men and women were still perplexed by the mysteries of life and death.

Khalil chose to conduct us off the highroad, which seemed to us better adapted to the imperfect light, and over some very rough ground

through the village of Gath-Hepher, birthplace of Jonah, and where, as may be gathered from the presence of his tomb, he was also buried. He was, additionally, buried near Jaffa, and somewhere in the direction of Hebron—circumstances of a nature not unusual in the case of saints and heroes popular among the faithful of more than one confession. This, we gathered, was his Moslem burial-place.

About twenty minutes later we reached the spring of Kefr Kennâ, probably the Cana of the New Testament, and, if so, the source of the water that was made wine. The women, somewhat wild-looking and unkempt at this early hour, were filling their jars from the sarcophagus into which the water runs; but they offered no discourtesy, and made no demands for backsheesh. It was barely seven o'clock when we rode into the courtyard of the little Latin church built over the alleged site of the first miracle of Jesus. The Franciscans in charge of the mission were in church, we were told, and we made our way in, and found the father (with the single attendant brother) saying his office by the light of a solitary candle. When he had finished he hastened to place himself at our disposal, showed us the church, and afterwards invited us to take

refreshment. The church is a little gem, both as to architecture and decoration. It is seldom one can honestly admire a modern church in this country, as, however good the building may be, it is generally hideously disfigured by the offerings of the faithful. However, at Cana there are no nuns to make crochet and paper flowers, no opportunities for grateful Arabs to testify piety by Christmas-tree balls. All is of rich simplicity, and the Père Curé is too good an archæologist to allow of the usual glaring anomalies. The church, built in 1880, stands on the site of an older one, visible below the present flooring at various points where trap-doors are open to exhibit, here an inscription in mosiac, there a fragment of wall or of carving; but it may be doubted whether these belong to the church built by Helena and described by Paula in the fourth, Antoninus Martyr in the sixth, and Willibald in the seventh century; and visited, according to Michaud, by St Louis, in May 1251, with his wife, Margaret of Provence. A large earthenware jar is shown in the church, of antique design and of local manufacture, in illustration of those in use in the time of our Lord. The amount of wine that six such water-pots would contain was, indeed, a princely wedding-gift.

In the simple little presbytery, at right angles with the church, curiously reminiscent of many an one in the Highlands of Scotland, we tasted the wine of Cana of Galilee, the red wine of the district, pure and refreshing, with the cordial quality of Burgundy rather than the acidity of claret.

A little Franciscan oratory, built upon the foundations of an ancient chapel, which, in its turn, became a mosque, marks the traditional site of the house of Nathaniel. The adjoining ground now serves as a cemetery. We retraced our steps to the entrance of the village, and returned once more to the Great Plain, where, as we passed by the village of Nahallal, the conviction was forced upon us that the praying agriculturists were about to meet with the fulfilment of their hopes. We had talked of the great black clouds which had been gathering ever since our departure as "fine atmospheric effects," and had refused to listen to the kindly warnings of our good friends at Cana, but we looked with some dismay at the wide, shelterless valley we must cross before reaching the foot of Mount Tabor, where protection among the trees might be hoped for. Fortunately, there was no wind, so the horses made no objection to the rain, although the abrupt, rocky descent into the valley was very

slippery. The climb beyond we made on foot, partly out of regard for our horses and partly for the pleasure of delaying at will to enjoy the views and examine the flora.

The flowers and shrubs were very interesting, but less varied than on Carmel; and the clouds somewhat obscured the view until we reached the top, when a grand panorama burst upon us. It was a steep climb, for the mountain is two thousand and eighteen feet, and the plain can be very little above sea-level. However, the road is good, and we were rewarded by the discovery of a dolmen, of which we have not been able to find any record, the more interesting in that they are exceedingly rare west of the Jordan. Fragments of walls and heaps of stones, at various levels, show traces of earlier habitation; and, indeed, it has been lately maintained that, at the time of our Lord, the mountain was too thickly populated for such a scene as the Transfiguration to be at all possible. The evidence on this point is very conflicting, and the authorities at variance have been carefully discussed by P. Barnabé d'Alsace, who, unlike many critics of Holy Land sites, is familiar with the locality under consideration.¹

¹ See "Le Mont Thabor: Notices Historiques et Descriptives," Paris, 1900.

Lightfoot was the first to express, in 1675, doubt on the subject, mainly on the ground that a friend of his who had climbed the mountain said that it did not tally with the description of Josephus. Granted, for the sake of argument, that the village of the time of Josephus was equally large in the time of our Lord, the existence of an ancient cemetery sets a limit to its eastern extension, as a burial ground could never have been included within a Jewish city. The distance from the cemetery to the edge of the plateau exceeds the distance from the walls of Jerusalem to the Garden of Gethsemane, and the solitude of the Agony has never been called in question.

When we reached the top of the mountain we found ourselves facing a substantial gateway, worthy of the entrance to a park, and with a good carriage drive beyond. Arguing, from force of habit, that a desired end is never approached in this country by a straightforward path, and being wet, hungry, and tired, we reflected that to climb two or three walls, drop into a kitchen garden, and then across a long, ploughed field with no visible means of exit, was the most likely method to bring us quickly within reach of food and shelter. Accordingly we arrived, in time, at a group of buildings, defended by a number of indignant

dogs, from whom we were happily separated by a locked gate. Their remonstrances brought forth assistance, and we were finally rescued by a Greek monk, who welcomed us kindly, although to the wrong convent. The Doctor made a rush at some Arabic inscriptions leaning against the west wall of the church ; and, of course, we paid a visit to the church itself, within which some remains of an ancient building are preserved, consisting of two apses and part of a mosaic pavement, possibly belonging to the Church of St Elias, and probably of the fourth or fifth century. A little boy led us finally into the right path, and in a few minutes we were within the kindly hospice of the Franciscans, and, but little later, in the presence of a breakfast which we felt we had, for once, earned in the sweat of our brow. A German father and a Dutch brother supplied all our needs, and refreshed us, moreover, with much pleasant talk, reminding us that our climb had been accomplished by the Empress Helena "in her eighties."

The plateau is covered with ruined churches and convents, as the mountain has been held sacred from a very early period—the earliest known mention of it as the site of the Transfiguration being in the Apocryphal gospel according

to the Hebrews, the exact date of which is not established more precisely than that it was known to St Ignatius, who died in 107. The mountain is mentioned by Origen and St Jerome, and was visited by several early pilgrims—Paula, Antoninus Martyr, our English Willibald, and others. The earliest convent was established by the Benedictines in 1100; but as early as the sixth century the three tabernacles, desired by St Peter, were already built.

The Franciscan buildings, which are very simple, date only from 1873, when the Friars Minor first obtained a footing on the mountain, the Greeks (Orthodox) having preceded them by five or six years.

Climbing on to a platform of masonry, at the western end of the plateau, we were much encouraged, on looking N.-E. towards Tiberias in the direction in which we were going, to observe a blue sky, and the hoary head of Hermon gleaming bright in clear sunshine.

It was a hint to depart, and we hastened, despite intermittent "April showers," to begin our descent, which, to our regret, had to be made by the same path by which we had ascended. We had hoped to have enjoyed the variety of examining the northern or eastern slope.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEA OF GALILEE

“We go to the Sea of Galilee . . . and although they call it a sea, it is neither a sea nor arm of the sea ; for it is but a stank of fresh water . . . and it hath in it great plenty of good fish, and the River Jordan runs through it.”—SIR JOHN MAUNDEVILLE, 1322

IT was a glorious ride from Tabor to Tiberias. The rain clouds hastened westward, and, as we heard later, gratified the thirsty souls at Nazareth, and left us to a thorough enjoyment of our day. We were delighted to find ourselves off the beaten track, for the carriage road to Tiberias was considerably to our north. We had been told, to our satisfaction, that the alternative road by way of Tabor, as it lay a little low, did not give us such frequent glimpses of parts of the lake, but that we should come upon the glorious prospect all at once, and the expectation kept us constantly on the watch. Our road lay for the most part through well-cultivated country, belonging partly to the Bedu and partly to the Circassians, and the wide fields, in which the corn was springing, were a delightful

and refreshing sight. We pictured what it would be later in the year to ride, as we were assured we might, through vegetation up to the saddle—barley, maize, sesame, doura, with yellow marguerite and blue eryngo, and campanulas of every shade, raising proud heads above the golden wealth. We were, however, quite content with the garden which had been prepared for us—such an one would be, indeed, difficult to find anywhere else, in such combination, and in the first week of January. Perhaps one great charm of it all was that it was just such a day, and such a spectacle, as one might enjoy, three months later in parks and gardens at home—only glorified as to colour, size, and fragrance, and that here all the flowers were the wild children of Mother Nature. Capers, fennel, asparagus, and scores of balsamic herbs, in which the bees were gaily humming, took us, in thought, into the kitchen gardens of home, now lying under a white coverlet in winter sleep. Here all was so warm in the sunshine that lizards, and even chameleons and tortoises, had wakened up to greet the glad new year.

We passed the immense ruins of a fine khan of fifteenth-century workmanship, and those of an Arab castle on a height beyond, both now

serving only as refuge to the flocks of the Bedu, who, on account of the presence of an excellent spring, seek shelter about its walls. Circassian and Bedawy cultivation we had seen, wide tracts in possession of the Jews were pointed out to us at a distance, and at Kafr Sabt we found a village of peasantry from Algeria. Somewhat to the north, the twin peaks of Karn Hattîn looked down upon this aggregation of race and creed—the scene, according to a tradition (not, however, older than the sixteenth century), of the Sermon on the Mount. The same mountain has another association, that of the battle in July 1187, in which Salah ed-din totally defeated the Franks, and gave the death-blow to their power in Palestine. King Guy de Lusignan was taken prisoner, the knights were sold as slaves, the Templars and Hospitallers executed, on the very site where, perhaps, the Master, looking down the avenue of centuries, had said: “Blessed are the merciful, the peacemakers, the pure in heart.” Whether the blessings were any more applicable to the Christian Crusader than to the Moslem conqueror is a point upon which the testimony of history leaves one somewhat in doubt.

At the bottom of the valley, into which we soon

descended, followed close by a family party of Jews, who seemed glad of the protection of our presence, we found ourselves upon a wide, fertile plain bounded by a water-course ;—that we noted the water-courses is a sign that we have been living in arid Judæa ;—and then we rose once more, and for the last time, reaching the plateau of Ard el Hammâ, when the promised view burst upon us. Our Jews were actually alarmed by our simultaneous shout of delight : Khalil only smiled sardonically, quite inured to the unaccountable pleasure which the Frenjys exhibited over what not even an Armenian or a Government official could turn into so much as a bishlik (value 6d.).

The Sea of Tiberias is about thirteen miles long by five to eight wide ; its proportions much those of Windermere ; its form an irregular oval ; indeed, it is said that its ancient name of Kinnerôt is derived from Kinnor, a lute, in allusion to its shape. It lies 681 feet below the Mediterranean, so that it has an almost subtropical, and very abundant, vegetation. The steep hills are of moderate height ; but great Hermon, looking over their shoulders at the northern end, dwarfs all else into insignificance. There is, for the most part, but a ribbon of coast, green with

herbage and trees, and bordered with glistening sand and shells. It is like a bonnie Highland loch, not wooded like Loch Lomond, nor, on the other hand, bare like Coruisk, but smiling, peaceful, inviting to repose. The very sight of such a quantity of water was refreshing to us, coming, as we did, from a city where it is often cheaper to drink a bottle, or even two, of wine, than to take a bath. In little villages dotted along the shore we could fancy that we might hear the kindly Gaelic instead of the Arabic, which has, however, many similar sounds; the laddie herding on yonder hill is playing an instrument "own brother" to the chanters, and snow-crowned Hermon dominates his world like Cruachan or Schiehallion. The extreme southern end is hidden from us, and we must advance to the very edge of the cliff to see Tiberias lying at our feet—a long line of houses, varied by palms and minarets. At this distance, and before bettering our acquaintance with details, it is not difficult to reconstruct in imagination the city which must have been, in the time of Jesus, one of the many glories of Galilee. To realise the sheen and consistency of its beauty we have to remember that the whole had been newly built by Herod upon a

long-deserted site; that palace and race-course and citadel and forum, a great synagogue for the Jews (who refused, however, to enter the city), a wall three miles long, were all new, and all part of an artistic plan. We must remember that this was only one of nine cities, all more or less Greek in architecture and customs, said to have contained each, at least, fifteen thousand inhabitants—an almost unbroken chain around the lake, now so solitary that one's eye finds with difficulty traces of humanity elsewhere than in and about Tiberias, now a squalid townlet of four thousand inhabitants. As Sebaste was called after Augustus, so the name of Tiberius was given to this city—perhaps the old Rakkath. When the foundations were laid, quantities of human bones were laid bare, and the Jews refused to dwell in a city ceremonially unclean, so that Herod was driven to populate his new possession with the scum of the country. To judge from our later acquaintance with the manners and customs of the inhabitants their descendants are still in possession, reinforced by a still larger number of Jews, of whom, indeed, two-thirds of the population now consists. Rich gardens once existed where now are only swamps, beautiful to the eye, but breath-

ing out malarial fever; and fleets of sails met the eyes of Jesus and His fishermen friends where now we can discover but two little rowing-boats. Khalil pointed out the spot where, as he said, Jesus had made forty loaves of bread, and was much hurt that we did not take a note of the story, as we had done of other traditions. The story was true, he affirmed, and the company had eaten them with their fish.

Our horses were in good mood to-day, and we made them descend the steep hillside above Tiberias, by which we not only cut short the tortuous windings of the road but obtained a quick series of points of view, which furnished a panorama wonderful in colour and outline. The approach has still a certain grandeur. The wall and gateway, probably entirely ineffective as such, are picturesque in their decay. They are, indeed, of no great age, and may even belong only to the eighteenth-century restoration, when the town was refortified, to be again destroyed by an earthquake in 1837. We passed some modern European buildings, including a small but inviting little German hotel, and the hospital and manse of the mission of the Free Church of Scotland, and, still descending, paused before the gate of the Franciscan hospice. The rain which we

had seen ahead of us in the morning had fallen in Tiberias, and the streets were simply ditches of dirty water, with occasional islands, upon one of which we descended, and then, with a spring, found ourselves in the orderly courtyard.

A hearty welcome awaited us from the Brother in charge, an old friend, formerly gardener in the Garden of Gethsemane, and still practising his art, as the neat flower - beds and well - trained creepers testified.

The Arabs say that the king of fleas lives at Tiberias ; if so, he holds his court elsewhere than at the hospices—here and at Et Tábigħa, where next day we were kindly and comfortably entertained. After dinner we climbed to the roof, and had a glorious view of the lake, and of Mount Hermon, and of the tall palms waving in the moonlight. An epidemic of cholera in 1903 produced a fearful mortality, amounting, it is said, to one-fourth of the population, and of these over three-fourths were Jews, probably owing to the extreme filth of their surroundings.

Next morning we set off, after an early breakfast, to ride up to the north end of the lake. Our farther journey, to Besan, would take us southward, and we were warned not to attempt the eastern shore without an escort, as the Bedu there

are very wild. We passed the neat hospital and manse, covered with a crimson flame of bougainvillea, and shaded by pleasant trees, with gardens sloping down to the water, and in a few minutes were out of sight of the town, with only the blue lake, with its green margin and surrounding hills, to feast our eyes upon. Ruins, wells with stone enclosures, rock tombs—all speak of a past population. The first sign of present habitation was a miserable village, said to be Magdala. Even here some massive fragments of wall testify to earlier prosperity. Here the shore widens out into the plain of Gennesaret, bounded towards the south-east by a rugged hill, in which are many large caves, formerly the stronghold of robbers, which were fortified without, and adapted for residence by long connecting galleries, and by cisterns, which collected water for the occupants. These bandits gave much trouble to Herod the Great, as they were practically unassailable, the only access to their homes being in the face of a rock eleven hundred feet high. They were finally reached by means of lowering soldiers from the top in cages, and were ultimately overpowered. At a later date these fortified caverns were utilised by Josephus in his struggle with the Romans, and still later they served as hermitages.

According to some authorities, Taricheæ is to be identified with Magdala, though others place it farther south. Its associations are historical and commercial, not religious. The name signifies "pickling-place"; and the salt fish of Galilee were known throughout the Roman Empire—large quantities were taken up to Jerusalem at feast-times, and barrels exported to the shores of the Mediterranean. The great draughts of fish such as we read of in the gospels must have been brought to Taricheæ for preservation, otherwise they would have been wasted in this sub-tropical climate.

A little past Mejdal our road led us down to the very edge of the lake, where we were tempted to dismount to gather shells, which are very beautiful and varied. The shore is fringed all the way with oleander-bushes, "the blossoms red and bright" of Keble's poem—one of those touches of realism in his verses which are the more remarkable that he was never in Palestine. Khalil thought our occupation very childish, and never could understand why we should want to walk when we were paying for horses to ride upon. Before long we were forced to mount again by the necessity of having to cross several streams making their way down to the lake. The path gradually ascended

till we found ourselves following an aqueduct along a very narrow ridge at some height above the water, just after passing the ruins of the large Khan Minyeh, to which it had served to conduct water in the days of Salah ed-din. We had forcible illustration of the sudden storms for which this lake has been always known, for just as we were carefully picking our way along our precarious path a sudden squall arose, and in a moment the wind was whistling about us, rain was dashing in our faces, and the lake was beating angrily upon the shore. There was an instant's question of sheltering among the fig-trees below or of going back; but we would not give in, and after some twenty minutes of discomfort, we came suddenly upon a little group of buildings, obviously European. The Doctor dismounted to beg shelter, and in a very few minutes we found ourselves within the hospitable walls of the hospice of the German Catholic Palæstina Verein. This was a welcome surprise; we had heard of this mission and its hospitalities, but had not realised that we were already at Ain et Tâbigha (possibly Bethsaida), and actually under the roof of the well-known Father Biever, of whom we had heard so much at Madaba.

The house was in course of structural altera-

tion, a good deal of furniture encumbered the wide piazza, workmen were sheltering from the rain, the Father himself was absent, but none of these difficulties subtracted from the cordiality of our welcome. Our horses were stabled, and we, laying aside our wraps, prepared to stay to luncheon. It was an ideal spot: the house built upon a narrow terrace, the bank laid out in gardens sloping down to the water's edge, the arcade covered with roses, among which the *Maréchal Niel* was conspicuous; abundance of flowers of various kinds, and a friendly family of cats, dogs, ducks of the handsome Aleppo breed, and some fine poultry and pigeons, added to the attractions.

Our vice-host, Father Biever's companion and assistant priest, made us soon feel at home, and we were not difficult to persuade that the rain was far too persistent to make our return possible, and that we had better take up our quarters in the hospice till the morrow. Khalil was despatched back to Tiberias to relieve the anxieties of the Artist, and we settled down, very thankful to be out of the storm.

We were greatly interested in our passing glimpse of a life which seemed to us to have something of the practical usefulness, the self-

renunciation, of real mission work. Here were two highly-cultivated men deliberately and permanently establishing themselves in a spot where, for three hours' north and but little less south, they had no single neighbour except the Bedu, and one solitary Franciscan, whose acquaintance we were to make next day. Their own immediate household includes some four or five Arabs who serve the hospice, and assist in the labour of the well-kept fields and gardens, by which the house is largely supported, and lessons of practical utility taught to the surrounding natives. One of these was pointed out to us as the best fisherman on the lake, and we asked him to explain the use of the nets, which were lying under the wall of the house. He proceeded to collect one, which seemed to be circular, perhaps twenty feet in diameter, into large folds with his left hand. The mesh was fine, and the net, in spite of its size, easily grasped. Transferring it to his right hand, with a quick movement he threw the net from him, when it expanded into a large circle, so that one easily understood how the casting of such a net might include "a multitude of fishes."

Tristram says: "The lake swarms with fish as I could not have believed water could swarm";

but though fourteen species are reckoned as inhabiting the lake only four or five are ordinarily on the market. There are some, however, of exceptional interest, not only to the learned in such matters, but also to the merely observant like ourselves.

These include two species found nowhere else outside of the tropics—one the *chromis simonis*, of which one species, the *chromis paterfamilias*, for several weeks carries the eggs and the young, to the number, it is said, of two hundred, in his mouth; the other, the *clarias macracanthus*, which emits a sound: it was known to Josephus as the *coracinus*. Several varieties of the *capoëta Damascéna*, the luminous fish, are also found here.

There was so much to hear of interest that we were almost thankful to the rain for keeping us indoors. These solitary priests have adapted themselves to their environment in a manner which, were it more customary among religious teachers, would be of infinite value not only to religion but to science. One cannot think without regret of the wealth of information lost to the archæologist, anthropologist, philologist by the neglect of those who might secure unrivalled opportunities of intercourse with the people, but

many of whom after years in this country, leave it as ignorant as when they came, of all that lies beneath the surface. Our friends here, though able to converse in, at least, three or four European languages, use Arabic as their vernacular, speaking it even between themselves, the better to enter into the life of the people ; they are good horsemen and good shots, two qualifications absolutely necessary for friendship with the Bedu.¹ They possess, in addition to the animals necessary to the hospice, a beautiful Arab mare, the gift of one of the Madaba flock, and a very fine specimen of the Arab deerhound, not unlike an

¹ As an illustration of the esteem in which these acquirements are held we were told elsewhere the following incident :—A Franciscan friar, accustomed to ride between the widely-scattered convents of the order, was, on one occasion, traversing the desert on a very powerful young horse not yet properly disciplined. The party met with some Bedu belonging to a rich and powerful tribe, the shech of which was present. The young horse, possibly taking fright, or excited by the presence of the Arab mares always ridden by the Bedu, became violent, and tore off across the sands. The Franciscan, a very small man, and hampered by his habit, nevertheless retained his self-possession and his seat, and, in course of time, brought the animal back to obedience. The shech watched every manœuvre with the deepest interest, and when the priest returned to the party congratulated him very cordially, and offered him his daughter in marriage. It was explained that he was a priest. “I don’t mind that,” said the shech ; “he is just the son-in-law for me.” But the priest was poor. “No matter, he shall have her without payment of so much as a single camel. I have two daughters ; he shall choose between them : he shall be to me as a son.” History goes no further.

Irish deerhound in appearance, but swift as the gazelle which it hunts, and so exquisitely light of limb, without the hideous attenuation of the English greyhound, that such a dog is almost invariably known as "Rischân" (feather), feminine, "Rischi." Father Biever was originally an officer in the German army ; hence, probably, his power of organisation. He has also a natural capacity for architecture, as is testified by the very large and handsome Convent of St Pierre, perhaps the most effective modern building in Jerusalem, of which he was the architect and practical builder, in addition, it is said, to his having collected a part of the cost in America, where he had some experience of life among the cowboys. He made a very large collection of the flowers of the country, which, unfortunately, was lost with the vessel in which it was sent to Europe. It is to be earnestly hoped that his unique collection of the folklore of the Bedu and fellahin may be given to literature.

We were fortunate in happening to be present at an interesting little social ceremony. Our visit fell on Epiphany, and all the neighbours, Bedu and Druse, came in the evening to celebrate the visit of the Three Kings. The long hall was simply furnished with a table, moved aside

for the occasion, and a divan running round the walls. It was brightly lighted, and the household servants presided over the refreshments, which consisted of tea and some confectionery, specially made for the occasion, of very rich and sweet pastry, some of it in the form of puffs containing honey, and the rest in narrow rolls, which are known as "the fingers of Mary."

The company arrived all together, men and boys (the women, of course, being left at home), all dressed alike in the long robe, shawl, girdle, white keffeye, kept in place on the head by a double rope of goats' hair, and camels' hair mantle, which many removed. Some came barefoot, others removed their shoes on entering, and all sat cross-legged on the divan. The household servants were Arab peasants (fellahin), and regarded by the others as of a lower class—tillers, rather than owners, of the soil. They were differentiated by wearing turbans, made of large, coloured handkerchiefs twisted round the red tarbush, which is of different shape and manufacture from those worn in the towns. Two Arab women and the Lady were the sole representatives of their sex. The guests were perfectly self-possessed, with none of the *mauvaise honte* of such a gathering at home. They were

perfectly easy to entertain, and ready to converse upon any subject, although, we were assured, less interesting than the natives east of the Jordan. The Bedu smoked when invited—the Druses add the prohibition of tobacco to the Moslem prohibition of wine.

When tea was handed round, the fun of the evening began. Two of the cakes contained each a bean, and those who found themselves possessors of the beans were king and queen for the evening; obviously a variant of an original three beans and three kings. The queen was a young Druse, tall and slim, with good features, and long, narrow eyes, which gave him an expression of sleepy good nature; the king was a much quicker-witted fellah, thick-set, with a certain piquant ugliness, and bearing the name of Dieb, which, in Arabic, means “wolf,” and which, whether in Arabic or in German, was, we were told, equally appropriate.

In true Oriental fashion, the king issued commands through his wife, and required services of various kinds from the assembled company, who cheerfully complied, filled his drinking-bowl with tea or water as he might desire, fetched his tobacco, sang to him, and danced for him. The climax was reached when two of the men

were required to serve the queen for a horse, and the tall Druse had to proceed up the room leaning on the shoulders of the two. The Oriental is a born mime, and the ridiculous situation was carried off with a *savoir faire* which only an entire lack of self-consciousness could account for. No musical instrument was at hand, but a little boy, of perhaps twelve, evidently a known expert, produced an excellent imitation of the shepherd's pipe by blowing into his fingers. We were sorry to get none of the characteristic singing, in which, as in the Hebrides, a *motif* is announced by one, and taken up in chorus by the rest; but the guests came from different villages, and, therefore, did not know the same songs—a fact which speaks volumes for the wealth of folk-songs—a wealth as yet very imperfectly estimated.

Nothing could have been more orderly and well mannered; the only exception was one of those which prove the rule. A boy, of perhaps sixteen, probably from shyness, refused to sing, upon which he was told to go. “You have had your *Kuchen*” (it was quaint to hear the Arab adoption of the word used among ourselves); “you have had your tea; you will do nothing—go!” And go he did, though we were pleased to see

him slip in, half-an-hour later, by another door. When the king became impatient of his consort's inertness he started to his feet, tore off his head-dress, distorted his features, producing the most entire change in his appearance, and performed a whole drama in dumb show, which, even to the uninitiated, was extremely comic, and which produced shouts of laughter among the Arab element of the party—the Druse and Bedu dignity being less easily disturbed.

Arab entertainments are very long drawn out: when we retired to our rooms, adjoining the chapel, the party showed no intention of breaking up. The long - desired rain was a source of satisfaction, which added to the general placidity, if not hilarity.

Next morning we awoke to a world of intense green and blue, glistening with raindrops and glad with the singing of birds, the bulbul among the loudest, though it must be owned that, apart from association, he is much overrated, being vastly inferior to the nightingale or, to our ears, the thrush or the blackbird. After an early breakfast we remounted our horses, and, accompanied by our host, proceeded upon our interrupted journey northward.

We noted the little landing-stage, one of those

reminiscences of the visit of the German Emperor to be found all over Palestine—sole representative of the busy wharves and boat-builders' yards of the time of our Lord, to which time belong also the tanneries, potteries, and dyeing-sheds, the remains of which are scattered around Et Tâbigha. Farther on we came upon hot springs, and the, to us, novel sight of a hot waterfall, with the remains of mills, aqueducts, and, possibly, baths.

In about half-an-hour we were at Tell Hûm, which, although no systematic excavation has yet been possible, is by many authorities assumed to be identical with Capernaum, and which, in this belief, was acquired in 1890 by the Franciscans, who, however, dare not, for political reasons, call attention for the present to the elaborate ruins which exist not far beneath the surface, and the workmanship of which appears to be Roman. Meantime the soil is under cultivation for the use of the convent at Tiberias, a solitary brother remaining there to direct the labours of the Arabs. The low, swampy ground is unwholesome for Europeans, and it is necessary to replace the lonely Franciscan every few months. The authenticity of the site has been much disputed; but the cautious Baedeker regards it as

“as good as certain,” largely on the authority of the old itineraries of pilgrims. Whatever its name, it was undoubtedly a sacred spot to the early Christians. The remains include the foundations of a building of unusual beauty, constructed of immense blocks of white limestone, so fine as to resemble marble, which must have been 75 feet long by 54 wide. The bases of columns and some very ornate Corinthian capitals are still visible, and it is not impossible that we may have here the synagogue built by the centurion, of whom it was said: “He loveth our nation!” The ruins, probably of a Christian church, which were seen here in 600 are not far distant, and it is evident that a considerable town once stood here—if not Capernaum then some other—upon which Romans and Christians have, in turn, expended wealth and interest.

On our way back to Tiberias, we listened to many stories illustrating the psychology and beliefs of the people; of, among other things, the science and superstitions in regard to the horse—traditions which deserve to be preserved. In this country, except where civilisation has introduced bearing-reins, tail-docking, and other deformities, it is assumed that Nature understood her own business, and that, for example, the object of a tail

was for the relief of a horse when tormented by flies, for which purpose, as well as for beauty, the longer and fuller it is the better. They judge of a horse's age not only by the teeth but by the tail, which takes some years to bring to perfection. The first year it is kept bare, the second thinned, after which it is allowed to grow. The Arabs preserve the genealogies of all their horses, many of them up to hundreds of generations, and their classification is very elaborate. There was a time when only one horse existed in the country, and he was the property of Solomon, who, however, seems to have been imperfect in horsemanship, as he was, on a certain occasion, thrown, for which offence against imperial dignity the horse was condemned to death. He was ridden down from Jerusalem to Jaffa, weighted with stones, and sunk into the sea. As he was in his death agony, five bubbles rose to the surface, which developed into five horses, each the ancestor of a separate type (details, as in the Genesis account of the ancestry of the human race, not explained). Each of these stems furnished five sub-families, and from one or other of these, every pedigree horse is descended.

Another story which illustrated certain char-

acteristics of native life, and the possibility of making the most of occasion, related to a couple of shechs who came from a great distance to consult a certain priest in a very delicate matter. As is the custom of the country, they talked of irrelevant matters for about four hours, and then submitted their difficulties. Neither of them had any children—*i.e.* possessed no son, but merely “a piece of a daughter.” The phrase is equivalent to our use in referring to “a head of cattle.” The priest was well known for his power and benevolence ; surely he would exercise both in so worthy a direction ! With characteristic presence of mind he seized the occasion for a moral lesson, and represented that certain changes of habit might be rewarded by the desired result. The shechs promised obedience, and departed. A year afterwards, when the incident was forgotten, the priest called to his servant one morning to remove a sheep which had trespassed into his garden, and was informed that this was a valuable present brought by one of the shechs upon the occasion of the arrival of a son and heir. Whether the other was less fortunate or less grateful history does not relate.

On our return, we visited the Khan Minyeh,

and a little east of it a small Tell, by some identified with the site of Bethsaida, which, however, is by other authorities located on the east side of the lake. The towns on the shore of Tiberias have been destroyed, to a degree surprising when we compare them with contemporary cities in the Decapolis. In Jerash, in Ammân we were able to reconstruct the life of the people—their homes, their temples, their amusements; in Chorazin, Bethsaida, Capernaum, Magdala we found, at the best, heaps of stones, and mounds grown over with grass and flowers.

In the absence of Khalil, Dieb, our friend of the night before, rode back with us to Tiberias, as, without a local guide, we might have found it difficult to know whereabouts to ford the many streams, which a twelve hours' downpour had swollen to considerable size. He was very useful and kindly, and filled the Lady's pockets with pretty shells from the lake, some of which must have been occupied, as she found two of them walking about, a month afterwards, in her hotel in Jerusalem.

CHAPTER VII

TIBERIAS AND BESAN

The River Jordan boils out from two foundations, of which one is called Jor and the other Dan, the streams of which, joining in one, become a very rapid river, and take the name of Jordan."

SÆWULF, 1103

OF the town of Tiberias the less said the better, though it should be admitted that we saw it under exceptional circumstances—after twelve hours' steady rain, for which it is certainly not adapted. Most of the streets are stone tunnels, where, when it once enters, the water stands in large pools unaffected by sun or wind, and with only islands of decaying matter, animal and vegetable, to serve as steps for hapless pedestrians. In the open streets the inhabitants, with a view to protection from sun, have rigged up coverings of old mats, old carpets, old clothes, which, naturally, shed unsavoury drippings upon our heads as we passed beneath. The exquisite cleanliness and brightness of our convent quarters tempted us to stay within, and enjoy the glorious view of lake and mountain from the roof; but we resisted, and were well

rewarded for our walk up to the Scottish hospital by the sight of good work well and scientifically done, of missionaries who follow in the footsteps of their Master, who has left us but one sermon, and countless instances of work among the sick and the needy. Of the Scottish and American missions in Palestine the English visitor can feel justly proud, if not of his race, at least of those who speak his tongue.

The remainder of our time in Tiberias was spent, not in the world of the Old or New Testaments, or even of the Crusaders, but in the first six centuries A.D., when the Jews had forgotten their original hatred of its novelty and its ceremonial uncleanness, and had accepted it, with Jerusalem, Safed, and Hebron, as one of their four holy cities; had established a theological university, and built over a dozen synagogues. As at the universities of Europe in the Middle Ages, students would come and attach themselves to this or that teacher, sitting at his feet in his own house, or listening to his discussions with other Gamaliels in public places. It is probable that Christ never came to this city; and, indeed, all its personal associations are of a later period. Here Josephus had a powerful stronghold during

the Jewish wars; here, after the destruction of Jerusalem, we find the Sanhedrin; here, testifying to the strength and progress of Christianity, the opposition school of the Talmud was established; here the Mishna, the collection of ancient tradition, was published in 200 A.D.; here, some four hundred years later, the so-called Jerusalem Talmud; here the now accepted pointing of the Hebrew Bible came into existence—in fact, it is the cradle of Jewish literature and learning. Its Christian associations are few. There were bishops of Tiberias in the fifth century; but their flocks must have been small, and the bishopric died out, to be revived by the Crusaders. It was here that St Jerome learned Hebrew, in preparation for his work upon the Vulgate.

We picked our way among the pools, as best we could, to the outside of the city, and up the hill westward, asking our way to the tombs of various learned rabbis from the Jews whom we met on the road, but who, unless they were silent from suspicion, seemed but little acquainted with the shrines of Maimonides, the philosopher, Rab Jochanan Ben Sakai, or even with the celebrated Rabbi Akiba, who took so prominent a part in the revolt of Bar Cochba, whose claims

to be the Messiah he supported with a zeal which led to the ultimate destruction of the last remnant of the Jewish kingdom in 135.

We found the graves of the great Talmudist Rabbi Meîr and two of his pupils in a school of the Ashkenazim, which, for the nonce, was serving a very useful purpose as hospice for a number of German Jews travelling to a new colony farther south. They had spread their mattresses all over the dais, and were eating a meal which had the characteristic Jewish smell of fish and onions.

Of course, also, we visited the celebrated hot baths, which lie about a mile to the south of the town, in the neighbourhood of the old city, as is testified by the columns, capitals, and hewn stones scattered in every direction. The road seems to follow the lines of an old colonnade, to judge from the numerous bases of pillars gradually wearing away under the friction of carriage wheels. The water has a temperature of 143 degrees Fahrenheit, and even in the open air we found it impossible to endure the warmth of a little spring which gushed out from the hillside with a very unpleasant sulphurous smell. There are two general bath-houses, in one of which private baths may be had. These are much frequented, and seem to be very effectual in cases of rheumatism

and cutaneous disease, though, perhaps, less so than those at Callirhoe, east of the Jordan, of which marvellous, and apparently authentic, cures are related.

After one more night in Tiberias we set out at an early hour next morning on our way to Besan, from whence we proposed to visit Pella, and, crossing the Jordan, return down its eastern bank. It was a very easy ride, of about eight hours, along a good road, with fertile fields, green-sward, and abundant trees and bushes to refresh the eye; but as it lies, for the most part, six hundred feet below sea-level, one may well imagine that it is, as reported, later in the season intolerably hot. In strange contrast to the almost tropical vegetation, the palms and bananas, the oleanders and azaleas, were the great snow-covered shoulders of the Jebel es-Shech, the Mountain of the Shech, the highest point of Mount Hermon, dominating the landscape, and visible, whenever we looked backward, for the greater part of the day.

We were much interested in a Jewish family which accompanied us for some distance on their way to the colony. The mother, grasping an infant, was perilously balanced upon the top of the family bedding, beneath which the legs of a

mule were barely visible ; while an older child, of perhaps three, hung in a wooden box, accompanied by several gas-tins, on one side of a donkey, balanced on the other by the family wardrobe. The men were afoot, and generally in the rear, unless some displacement of the baggage or a specially deep ford seemed to require some attention on their part. The child seemed quite confident and happy, although the donkey, less heavily weighted than the mule, was generally far ahead, with the object of accumulating leisure for the snatching of a meal wherever specially tempting thistles invited.

We lunched at Jisr el Mujamia, where a temporary village of tents and wooden huts had been erected for those employed on the new railway—engineers, fellahin, workmen, and soldiers. The River Jordan, which we had been following almost ever since we left the Lake of Tiberias, here divided into several parallel streams, leaving a number of islands, now grown over with bushes and herbage, but probably covered when the river is full. A quaint stone bridge, with very acute arches, leading to a village, lent human interest to the scene ; and on the hills beyond we were shown the site of the town of Gadara, just south of the Yarmuk, one of the principal tribu-

taries of the Jordan. Here, also, are hot springs, much visited in the season, and the ruins of another of the Græco-Roman cities which encircle the lake, although considerably older than the Herodian city of Tiberias. We were constantly brought face to face with anomalies and anachronisms; but it is, nevertheless, a shock to one's preconceived ideas to turn from the busy scene in the immediate foreground—the skilful engineering of the new railway—to cross, in imagination, the Roman bridge, to pass the poor fellahin village, type, with its contrasting railway, of the civilisation of to-day, up to where, on yonder height, it is not difficult to call up, on their old sites, the amphitheatre of Gadara looking up the lake, the acropolis above, the triumphal archway, the Greek villas scattered on the hills to catch the breeze, the barracks of the Roman legions, whence the troops descended daily to the cities around. These were what met the eyes of Jesus when He wandered among yonder tombs and met the poor madman whose diseased imagination conceived himself to be one of the legions whom he daily looked upon in all their bravery of sheen and colour. And now the fellahin are storing their grain in sculptured sarcophagi; for the grave outlasts all, even its

occupants, and the graceful wreaths which did honour to some centurion over two thousand years ago still bloom immortally among the haste and squalor, the railways, the canvas tents, the wooden huts, the crumbling villages, the competition of to-day. Beyond the Jordan, with all its associations, at the foot of the hills which have looked on at so many cycles of change, the wounded earth yawned and gaped, awaiting the iron road which was to carry her children yet more rapidly to the end, which now, as of old, awaits us all. This eastern Nature, so full of the past, is seldom glad—has, except in her wildest utterances, little of the joy which Wordsworth found in the simpler revelations of our English hills—but the complication of ancient leisureliness by modern haste, of cycles of repose by the scars of modern science, is to add irony to melancholy, cynicism to meditation, to exhibit decay where she reveals only repose, to force utterance where she has offered us the music of songs unsung.

We were almost glad to turn away ; and soon the scene was changed. As we continued our way due south we only now and then caught glimpses of the Jordan, although we crossed many streams hastening down with their little contributions to the historic whole. All was

fresh and green; we mounted, perhaps, some 300 feet, and the plain widened out into the valley of Jezreel, and we found the air fresh and pleasant, although when we reached Besan we were still 320 feet below sea-level. We were free to enjoy the green earth and the blue sky without complication of historical associations, except when, about two hours after leaving our halting-place, we saw on a hill to our right a village now known as Kôkab el-Hawa, where King Fulke built a castle, known by the familiar name of Belvoir, and which was taken by Salah ed-din in 1188. We resisted the temptation to climb, although there are ruins to photograph, and it is said that the outlook deserves its name.

The approach to the town of Besan is truly surprising; and, indeed, the appearance of the whole neighbourhood is unique in Palestine, owing to the taste and activity of the mudir, who, it is whispered, remains here for political reasons, and who has had the good sense to make his exile as attractive as possible. The town lies in a green hollow, sloping westward towards the low-lying plain of Jezreel, some 300 feet below. The winding stream of the Jalûd waters it on the north, and streams flow abundantly in all directions. The hills to the north appear to be

of volcanic formation ; and, indeed, most of the rocks scattered about, seemed to be basalt. An excellent road approaches the town, bordered for some distance by well-planted trees, though we could not help observing what must be very discouraging to the æsthetic mudir, that, despite all pains taken for their security, they had been wantonly mishandled. The main street might well be called a boulevard. It is wide, planted mainly with acacias and the graceful azedarach (Pride of India), and the houses are stone, and mainly of two storeys. A great archway, flanked on either side by magnificent ancient Corinthian pillars, leads into the village khan, a large open space, surrounded on three sides by stables and outhouses ; while on the fourth is the inn itself, the upper storey, reserved for guests of the better class, being approached by an outside staircase. Here we found a large hall, furnished only by low stools, and some cupboards containing the wine and arak, theoretically eschewed by Moslem guests ; while various sleeping-rooms opened into a corridor beyond. Here we immediately secured the requisite accommodation, which was so far of a superior kind that it included bedsteads, as well as a table and a couple of chairs. Experience led us at a later hour to reject

bedsteads, curtains, and bedclothes, and to sleep upon a mattress and *lehaf* (wadded cotton quilt) upon the floor, supplemented by our own wraps.

We snatched a hurried meal, for we were occupied with certain ambitious projects, which absorbed our attention. Our dream — or, at all events, that of the Lady and the Doctor — the Artist preferred highroads and hotels — was to descend down the east bank of the Jordan, crossing the fords of Bethabara, and lunching at Pella, and thence to make our way through the desert to Jericho, a two days' journey, but a far more attractive prospect than a commonplace return *via* Nablûs, along a road we already knew, and which had long been vulgarised by the "Personally Conducted." The greatest attraction of all was, that, in the absence of villages, and having no tents, we should have to pass a night with the Meshalcha Bedu, who, we were told, were at this time encamped north of the Jabbok. They are a rich and powerful sept, belonging to the Beni Hasan, and their district lies about the tomb of the great Moslem general, Abu Obeidah Ibn el Jerrâh, of the time of Omar (c. 650). We were so very fortunate as to carry introductions from Dr Schumacher, who is, perhaps, better known east of the Jordan than any other Euro-

pean, and whose relations with the Bedu, as well as with the fellahin, are very different from those of the many who have been only unfortunate in their dealings with the natives. We were delighted at our prospects, and pictured ourselves listening to songs and folklore, gathered round a camp fire in the moonlight, pouring libations of coffee to the spirit of Shech Shadli, the originator of the beverage, giving up our revolvers in token of confidence in our hosts, looking on at the sword-dances of the young men, exchanging confidences with the women, and finally sleeping under a roof of camels' hair, upon priceless carpets and under silken coverlets.

To achieve this we must go in state, and the main thing was to enlarge our retinue, which consisted at present of the somewhat ragged Khalil, by the addition of a soldier, who would receive orders to make all the demands which were in accordance with our dignity—a fact not patent to the naked eye, but which the mudir instructed by our kind friend the American Consul, would doubtless accept. First we had to find the mudir, who was not at his own house, a fine modern building with large garden adorned with antique busts, and not at the serai (court-house), but who was finally discovered making

his afternoon devotions at the mosque. He was good enough to emerge with a train of attendants, a dignified man of middle age, carefully read the letter addressed to him, and assured us, in passable French, that our request should receive attention, and that the soldier would be at our service at six o'clock next morning.

We were then free to visit the sites which were the main object of our journey to Besan. The name Besan, which we now associate with the most beautiful city in Palestine, had for us at first no associations, and we did not feel any great excitement even when told that it was a strong and walled city in the time of Joshua, that the inhabitants had chariots of iron, which might well be used on the surrounding plain, nor even that it was to the wall of Beth-shean, as it was then called, that the bodies of Saul and his three sons were nailed, his armour being hung up as an offering in the temple of Astarte. But as we pursued our inquiries, the story of the city gained in interest. Thothmes III. must have passed through it when he overthrew one hundred and eighteen cities in Palestine, as it stands on the highway between Egypt and Damascus ; it is mentioned in Egyptian literature in the fourteenth century B.C. ; the Israelites found

it impregnable ; Holofernes, Pompey, Salah ed-din, occupied it, possibly also Tiglath-pileser and Sargon. Josephus calls it the richest city of the Decapolis, the only one west of the Jordan. In his time it was called Scythopolis, and it is one of the very few examples of reversion from the Greek to the older name. On the coins (Nero to Gordian), and by classical authors, the town is called Nysa, and the effigy on the coin is that of the nymph suckling Bacchus ; but the present name, corrupted from Beth-Sha'an, possibly the *house* (*beit*) of some pagan divinity, has been used since the Crusades.

Lastly, for the Christian, Besan has its special interest, as having been one of the places where, under Decius and Diocletian, the amphitheatres were used for the cruel slaughter not of wild beasts alone, but of the confessors of Christ. When we stood gazing at the majestic amphitheatre, with its twelve basalt benches for spectators, nearly two hundred feet in diameter, we imagined the Christian gladiator looking over the sea of heads which surrounded him to where the blue sky, and the blue hills of Gilead, gave promise of something which should endure when even yonder citadel, frowning to the north, had crumbled in decay. Delicate ferns and flowers

now shroud the entrance to the dark passages leading to the dens, where one may still see the iron rings to which the beasts were chained ; and in the recesses in which brass sounding-tubes facilitated the hearing of the roar of anger and the shriek of pain, swallows are darting in and out to chirping nestlings, impatient for their food.

We failed to find the hippodrome, said to lie west of the village, but now concealed by vegetation. The lines of a fine colonnade are easily traced, leading along the brook to an ancient bridge, beyond which is a street, and near by a massive fort ; north of this a reservoir, known as El Hammâm, obviously the site of Roman baths. Everywhere are columns, capitals, hewn stones. North of the great amphitheatre a Tell cries out for excavation, the massive wall and the great portal which once enclosed its summit being clearly traceable. Everywhere, in the hills beyond, are tombs, many with fine painting and sculpture. Where can the archæologist find richer promise? There is, happily, a rumour that it is one of the many sites likely to be taken in hand by German skill and perseverance. The very fact that Besan is, at least for the present, well out of the tourist track has preserved the ancient, perhaps also the modern, city, from exploitation.

Unfortunately, the railroad will soon be here, and who knows how long this beautiful city may escape all the influences which have corrupted and vulgarised Jerusalem?

Besan is at present purely Moslem: there are a few Christian inhabitants, mainly of the Greek Church, who seek occasional spiritual pabulum in Tiberias, only eight hours away, and who seem to enjoy equal rights with, and even to share some of the beliefs of, their neighbours. We saw, for example, a very interesting wely, which, like so many, if not most, in Syria, is resorted to by those of all creeds. It was, as usual, very difficult to obtain any exact information as to its history and origin. The tomb, apparently of a giant of ten feet or so, is a massive stone structure enclosed with a rough stone wall and surrounded by trees. The derwish in charge lives close by. The tomb and enclosure are decorated with numerous small flags, mainly white, the offerings of the faithful. We managed—not without difficulty—to photograph it secretly, both from within and without. We could only ascertain that it was sacred to a certain Bishop Jochanan, who, although our informants were somewhat confused as to details, seems to have been an apostate from Christianity, and a miracle-worker. The

wely serves purposes other than religious. It is much resorted to for the healing of the sick and for obtaining special boons ; but it is also supplementary to the serai, and saves many a lawsuit, as an oath made upon the tomb must be accepted as final, and he would be a very foolhardy man who would lie to the saint, whatever might be the degree of his reverence for the Almighty ! Every Moslem tomb (exclusive, naturally, of those of women, who are a mere accident in the course of nature) is surmounted by two stones, for the accommodation of the good and bad angels respectively, who testify as to his conduct ; one at least of these is of the shape of the fez or tarbush, which was the characteristic sign of faith and nationality during life. In the present case this feature is exaggerated in proportion to the size of the tomb, so that the whole roughly resembles the outline of a horse, the tarbush being taken for the head. The suspected culprit, or other person about to swear, sits astride, and makes oath accordingly. The saint is, moreover, the peacemaker in feuds, and the most persistent cases of blood-revenge must be abandoned when the opponents have shaken hands across the tomb. A man who here denies or confesses a crime receives judgment accordingly, without

further evidence. There seemed to be traces upon the doorposts of recent sacrifices, with the usual accompaniment of anointing with blood.

Perhaps nothing that we saw upon our ride surprised us more than the information that a large and handsome stone house in the town belonged to a Bedawy shech—a shech of shechs. One would have supposed that such a possession violated every instinct and tradition of his race, for we had once been present when an elderly Bedu, who had been forced by politeness to accept hospitality in a house for the first time, had sat in terror of what might happen, gun in hand. We sought in vain to account for such an anomaly. “Is he very rich?” we inquired, on the hypothesis that some crisis of agricultural depression had driven him to a more permanent investment. “Rich?” said our informant; “he can be as rich as he likes. Is he not the shech above all other shechs of the district? He wants a house, a camel, a tent? He takes it. He wants a wife—he may have had already twenty-nine. He takes my sister, my daughter, but he does not pay for her. It is not difficult for him to be rich.”

Nay, truly,

“The good old rule
Sufficeth him, the simple plan,
That they should take who have the power
And they should keep who can.”

It was the rule of David, of Solomon, of the nomadic Israelites wandering like the Bedu in the desert.

“Then rents and factors, rights of chase,
Sheriffs, and lairds and their domains,
Would all have seemed but paltry things,
Not worth a moment's pains.”

But, of course, this is quite another matter from the oppression of the poor, the rack-renting, the evictions, the unequal taxation, the results of free trade, the hunger and misery of great cities, the depopulation of villages, which are carried on in an orderly and properly organised fashion farther West.

We would have gladly lingered in this beautiful spot, surely the garden of Palestine, so great a contrast to the aridity of Judæa, which Mark Twain has somewhat severely described as “leagues of blighted, blasted, sandy, rocky, sun-burnt, ugly, dreary, infamous country.” We are apt to look upon the Jews as a utilitarian and money-loving people. Surely, however, nowhere on earth can we find a race whom senti-

ment and religion have so influenced in the choice and love of home. We Europeans do not realise that the great King Solomon, who reigned over a people "like the dust of the earth in multitude," and whose wealth made "silver to be nothing accounted of," had for empire part of a kingdom the size of Wales; and that, allowing all that one may for change of agricultural conditions, his capital was situated in its most unprofitable and one of its least attractive districts—six hours' ride from the nearest river, of which the average width was eighty feet; a district without a harbour, on the way to nowhere, out of reach of all the great roads of commerce and intercommunication of nations. Jerusalem owes her origin and continuance entirely to the heart and not the brain of man. She is the creation of the prophet, the priest, the dreamer. The mere statesman, agriculturist, sanitarian—humanitarian, even—would have none of her. Even to-day she survives only as a matter of sacred association. Take away her sanctuaries, her convents, and her tourists, and nothing would be left but the German colony—which could not remain without customers for its shops, or even maintain its institutions—and the Jews, who live

mainly on the charity of Europe. Agriculture, Jewish and German, would continue in the plains; philanthropy, Scottish and American, in Galilee and Syria; education and culture, American and Jesuit, in Beirut; commerce, German and Jewish, in Jaffa and Haifa; but all these exist independently of, almost in spite of, Jerusalem, and have been created for the advantage of mankind.

CHAPTER VIII

WEST OF THE JORDAN

“Yet who would stop, or fear to advance,
Though home or shelter he had none,
With such a sky to lead him on?”

W. WORDSWORTH

VERY few things in the East fulfil adequately the purposes for which they are intended, and we were not at all surprised when the soldier, who arrived punctually at six o'clock next morning, and who had many graces, and possibly all the virtues, appeared mounted on a horse utterly unfit for the fatiguing journey we contemplated. We accordingly despatched him back to the serai, with thanks and compliments, and a message to the effect that we should prefer a better article. These little matters consume a great deal of time, and a proportionate amount of bad language, and to economise the one, and avoid the other, we went for a walk. Our kindly companion, who had been for some years a dispenser in the Scottish hospital in Tiberias, seemed to think there would be no objection to a trespass into the grounds of the mudir's private house, and obligingly lent a

hand while we collected the antique busts which were dispersed about his garden, and arranged them on garden seats with a view to photography. It is not every day one comes across half-a-dozen perfect specimens of Greek art never photographed before ; and so obliging an amateur of beauty as the mudir had proved himself, would assuredly have understood and pardoned our temptation had he been up, which (perhaps happily, as some element of doubt remained) he was not. We then walked somewhat farther, feasted our eyes once more upon all the pleasant things of Besan, classical and modern, and when on our return we still found the incompetent steed tied up at the entrance to our khan, we wandered off to the serai, and finally possessed ourselves of an alternative soldier, although with some suspicion that this time it was the man, and not the horse, who was incompetent.

Neither Khalil nor the Artist had a high opinion of the plan cherished by the Lady and the Doctor—one feared scarcity of barley for the horses, the other of the amenities of civilisation for herself. The Artist, however, could not speak Arabic, so if there were any collusion with the officer it could only have been on the part of Khalil. We had not, however, gone far from

Besan, only far enough to be beyond reach of appeal, when we were presented with a series of pictures of the impossibilities ahead. No one knew where the Meshalcha Bedu were at present encamped—the place where they would undoubtedly be found was quite beyond a day's journey; we had started too late (it was already eight o'clock) to venture on so great a risk; it was not certain how we should be received. The consequences to ourselves were painted in vivid colours, but all these observations had for us an interest that was merely psychological and linguistic, as exhibiting the way in which the Arab mind worked. The Arab imagination was not daunted, however, and the next shot told. The fords of the Jordan would be impassable—had we not seen how full the Jalûd was, had not the little stream we had even now crossed reached to the knees of the horses, had not all the streams been drinking away there up in the hills, where Allah had so lately sent us the blessing of rain? The Lady and the Doctor looked guiltily at each other. The one put confidence in Sadowi, the other in his own inches; but if they should find they had inveigled the Artist into floating down the Jordan with not so much as an insurance upon her kodak! The Lady,

somewhat disingenuously, began to enlarge upon the prospect of visiting Pella, in hope of extracting an expression of desire, which might be quotable in case of emergency ; but her friend showed no enthusiasm for Greek cities, declined to endorse ravings over early Christian refugees, and asked if any other way were shorter. Khalil's honour was appealed to, as to the veracity of the soldier's allegations. He swore upon his beard, which he did not possess, and upon his eyes, of which only one was in working order, upon his head and his heart, that the thing was impossible.

What were we to do? Go meekly back to Besan, abandon all our prospects, our tent of many poles (we had been assured that we must not think of entering one with less than three, and that our dignity really required even more), our tattooed ladies with the trains of their dresses in front, our stately shech, who would undoubtedly kill a sheep and bake cakes for us, like the patriarchs did when they had guests—return to the banalities of Nablûs, where children asked for backsheesh, and finally ride home along a commonplace highroad to Jerusalem?

“When the tale of bricks is doubled Moses comes,” say the Arabs—and the soldier had

an idea. We were to descend the banks of the Jordan on the west side. We had been assured that no one ever did this, that the district was very wild, and even lawless, and that the few Bedu we might chance to meet were such as we should not care to house with. However, we had our soldier, who looked effective (at a distance), and was bristling with weapons, and it would be quite interesting to sleep in the desert, light a fire to keep off wild beasts, and take turns to mount guard, like a boys' story book. Apparently, however, it need not come to this. Somewhere in the wilderness was a serai, a little fortress or Government building, which existed for the accommodation of tax-collectors, and there we could, no doubt, find shelter. We were somewhat inclined to believe that the whole thing was "a put-up job," arranged before we left, and that our soldier's journey was being utilised for conveying despatches, or more, probably, messages, from the parent Government establishment in Besan. However, we could only submit; had we persisted, our leader was not so unintelligent as not to see that his prophecies were fulfilled, and we wheeled round, and turned off to the south-east, fairly content with our prospects after all.

We had followed the west side of the Jordan from the Sea of Tiberias to Besan, and now we were to follow it down to its fall into the Dead Sea—65 miles in all. Our path lay in the deep valley between the hills of Gilead on the east and the hills of Samaria and Judæa on the west—a valley which the Arabs very suitably call *El-Ghor*—*i.e.* The Rift. It varies in width from 6 or 7 miles in the district of Besan to about 3 for some 13 miles alongside the hills of Samaria, widening by slow degrees till near Jericho, when it stretches out into a plain, as at Besan. The river winds and twists deep down at the bottom, its course marked all the way by an exuberant fertility, often extending for some distance east and west, showing where tributary streams are hastening down from the watersheds above. We rode, for the most part, upon somewhat higher ground, on terraces of land at the foot, or on the side of, the hills, as the case might be, and were often able to look down into this deep hollow of vivid green, reminding us, in exaggerated form, as so much in this land is exaggerated, of a north country ghyll. To realise its depth one has to remember that it is deeper below the earth's surface than an average coal mine, that it is really an old sea-bottom,

and that the rapidity of the stream, falling at first 40 feet in a mile, accounts for the weird forms of washed-out mounds of earth, for the exposed tree roots, for the heaps of *débris* of all kinds. The name of the Jordan is not composed of the two names Jor and Dan, as the early pilgrims so ingeniously conjectured, but means, appropriately, the "downcomer."

For some distance, all around and below Besan, there are abundant signs of extreme fertility. In ancient times it was noted for corn, dates, balsam, flax, and sugar-cane. The edicts of Diocletian refer to its trade in linen, and Vespasian settled his troops in this district as one capable of bearing a large additional population. In the course of the morning we crossed over a score of streams, and many remains of aqueducts showed how, in old days, they had been turned to the utmost account for irrigation. When we had passed but a few miles beyond Besan, we lost all traces of human habitation, although not of human handiwork, for wide patches of well-cultivated land testified that, like the Israelites of old, the hill population only comes down to sow, guard, and reap its harvests. Indeed, for the greater part of the year the Ghor would be uninhabitable. Its

hothouse vegetation implies also a hothouse climate; its swamps are beautiful but malarious; its streams are valuable for irrigation but death-dealing to drink, impregnated with chlorides and sodium, and rank with decaying vegetable matter.

From time to time we came across small groups of Bedawy tents, mainly of a humble kind, although now and then a tent of three poles, with a lance planted at the doorway, testified to the presence of a shech. Within but a short distance we were certain to find large flocks of lambs, white and woolly, a rare sight to us, accustomed only to the goats capable of enduring the aridity of the Jerusalem district, and familiar with sheep only as household pets, sharing equally with the cat and the water-pipe. The problem which at first presented itself was: What had become of all the mothers? The answer was generally found a mile or so farther on, in some green spot, whither they had been driven for pasture, to be brought back later, to the safety of the camp, and the needs of their nurslings.

It seemed to us that we now and then climbed hills for the sake of descending them, and that more than once we went across country to return to the neighbourhood of the point from which

we started ; but, after all, it is difficult to judge of distances with only distant mountains for landmarks, and one part of such a valley as the Ghor is very much like another. We were to lunch beside the Wady Mâlih, the first stream on this part of our journey suitable alike for horse and man, but the wady was long in coming. At intervals we inquired as to its whereabouts, and were always told it was *ba'ad wahad saar*—"after half-an-hour"—and after about four half-hours, when the horses were getting somewhat weary, and our eyes ached from the glare of the sand, we entered a narrow valley, a wonderful garden of loveliness. For some time we had seen no animal life except lizards, an occasional jerboa (a pretty little miniature kangaroo), and occasional birds of prey—ravens, eagles, and griffon-vultures—flying high in the heavens towards some horse or camel, dead or dying. Here, at the very entrance of the valley, we disturbed innumerable pairs of busy little chats, among the daintiest of the bird creation (*saxicola libanotica*) ; and, almost equally graceful as to outline, although of a reddish-brown colour, like a robin, the little desert larks, which chattered rather than sang, as they hovered over the tangle of bulrushes and sedge-grass.

Now and then we saw a gorgeous kingfisher, blue as sapphires, turquoises—blue as the sky itself. A little later we should probably have found storks, “the father of legs” as the Arabs call them, who arrive in the early spring in immense numbers, and add to the general fairy-tale effect of this country. The stream was concealed by a thicket of verdure, bordered, on slightly higher ground, by oleanders and willows, above them a belt of white poplars and tamarisks ; while the steep, sloping banks were clothed with the bushes of the graceful capers, just coming into leaf, rival, in Palestine, of our own wild rose ; while everywhere chrysanthemums, ornithogalums, scented stocks, hawkweeds, and centaureas promised abundance of colour if we would but await their coming.

We clamoured for an immediate halt—where could we find so inviting a spot?—but our attendants turned a deaf ear, and pressed on, gradually mounting to higher ground, and leaving our beautiful, but probably malarious, swamp behind. We dismounted finally on a little knoll crowned with trees, the stream, now clear of foliage, and accessible for the horses, winding about its foot, and a gay little waterfall making music for us beyond. Here we lunched and

rested, and then we had an illustration, characteristic of this country, of the wild-beast habits of the Arab. We are well accustomed to the fact that real solitude is here, in an ordinary way, impossible. You may scan the horizon, and see no sign of humanity for miles, but within a few minutes a picturesque Arab is beside you, asking impudently for backsheesh, insinuating that the hour is propitious for the smoking of tobacco, or offering you water or milk, according to the degree of his association with the improving influences of European civilisation. In the desert the Arab is still a gentleman, and the little group which suddenly appeared within a few feet of us — though for a dozen miles at least we had not seen so much humanity as might be implied by the presence of a single goat—offered no incivility, although they were mainly women, and therefore, as a rule, inferior in courtesy to the men. They did not even stare unduly ; in fact, not half so much as we did at them. It is a curious and invariable fact that here, Arabs spring out of the earth, like London boys at an accident.

We did not feel entire confidence in our cicerone, as such ; and as it was already late we dared not linger, and by three o'clock we had

mounted our horses, forded the Mâlih, and, mounting the steep acclivity beyond, found ourselves on high ground, which is the watershed for the innumerable wadys which wander down to the sinuous Jordan on our left. Hence we could look back to the hoary head of the Jebel es-Shech, of Mount Hermon, and forward to the Jebel Osha in the Belka; while on the hither side a break in the hills showed where the river Jabbok, another old friend of our last ride, was working its winding way down to the Jordan. If we had but known it—such information being far from the thoughts and interests of our escort, even had they known it themselves—we ought to have turned aside some four hours later to see the caverns of Makhrûd, which are, so far as we can learn, valuable alike to the geologist, and to the student of natural history.

However, we kept on our way, on somewhat high ground, till we entered a fertile valley, tending gradually to the south-east, and which our escort saluted with joy as the Wady Faria, in which our quarters for the night were situated. Here, *ba'ad wahad sa'a*—"after one hour"—we should be at the end of our journey. Well-cultivated fields surrounded us, and even climbed the hill beyond, evidences of the existence of a

population which remained invisible : not a tent, not a single human being was in sight. We descended yet deeper, the hour passed, and yet another, and we found ourselves in a wide plain, which we crossed to the eastward. "Ba'ad nus sâ'a" was now the promise—"after half-an-hour"; varied after yet another hour by "ba'ad cham-seh sâ'a"—"after a quarter of an hour." Our guide had clearly gone too far west, and had struck the wady at the point farthest from our destination. The twilight fell, and it was then clearly evident that we had lost our way. The soldier had the sense to follow the stream, as likely to conduct us ultimately to our destination; but we had lost the path, and it was sorely rough riding. Darkness descended with true Oriental abruptness; moon there was none, and clouds obscured the stars. Suddenly Sadowi, who was foremost, declined to move, and the Artist's horse stumbled; the men got off, and felt the ground. We were on the edge of a precipice, the horses were already entangled in the rough brushwood, a perpendicular wall rose to our right—to turn back was impossible. The ladies dismounted, and placed themselves on a ledge of rock, out of the way of the uneasy horses. Khalil, afraid for the safety of his

animals, broke forth into violent abuse of the soldier, whose curses, in return, were not loud but deep. The Doctor commanded silence, some of which he utilised for the expression of his own opinions. After much searching, in all the wrong places, some candles were produced, and lighted, upon which the rain most unexpectedly descended in torrents, and put them out. Anything, however, seemed better than inaction: two of us finally contrived, by means of holding the candles within our cloaks to shed enough light in front of us, to make some kind of progress; while the soldier with another went ahead. Khalil followed with the five horses, who picked their way with their usual cleverness, unencumbered except by saddle-bags, which now and then caught upon the bushes, and were disengaged with a jerk which would have reduced anything, but goats' hair, to rags. We contrived, somehow, to reach the top of the bank, and were much cheered to see, a mile or so ahead of us, a flickering light, and to hear the barking of dogs—always a welcome sound when one is in the dark and far from shelter. After half-an-hour of very rough scrambling we found ourselves again upon a path, which conducted us direct to the welcome light. This we found

to proceed from a great fire in the midst of a Bedawy camp—a weird spectacle in such surroundings. We were challenged at various points by their scouts: *shishu*?—“Who goes there”; but, fortunately, the reply: *sahib*—“A friend”—appeared to be satisfactory. When we came into the camp we were immediately surrounded by the inquiring population, who offered no discourtesy; all the same, we considered it wise to keep an eye upon the contents of our saddle-bags. The open space was encumbered with cows and sheep, and the glare of an immense bonfire added to our bewilderment. The children and women gathered round us, and touched our clothes, though with far more gentleness than would be shown in London to, say, a group of Australian natives—and we must have seemed not less strange to our new friends. The serai was yet far, they averred, the night was dark, the road was rough; would we not remain with them? We escaped their kindly importunity with what grace we could, and left Khalil to bargain for a guide—a process quite as characteristically grasping as their would-be hospitality was characteristically liberal. Khalil offered a bishlik (6d.); they held out for four piasters (8d.); finally a compromise was effected

upon a bishlik and a packet of tobacco. We may remark that when, at the end of the drama, we produced the tobacco from our stores Khalil intercepted the gift, and stipulated that it should not be bestowed till the Bedu, whose activity had been stimulated at the sight of so unwonted a luxury, had helped him to water the horses. We were soon picking our way among ruins too dark to distinguish, but which we believe to have been those of the ancient Archelais, erected by Herod Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great. Before long we were on a good path ; the rain stopped, the stars came out, the Lady remounted her horse, and the spirits of the party rose again. Soon we were cheered by the steady gleam of a stationary light, and finally we clattered over a bridge and under a great gateway, and found ourselves in the court of the serai.

We received a friendly welcome from a gigantic negro, and were at once shown into a large room, with windows high up near the roof, and a door opening into the courtyard, around three sides of which the house was built ; while the fourth was enclosed with a wall the height of the building, with a strong iron-clad door — everything, apparently, being arranged with a view to security. An official,

said to be the lawyer or secretary of the establishment, politely vacated the guest-room on our behalf. Our saddle-bags were brought in, and, well content with shelter and the prospect of food, we prepared to make our arrangements for the night, our room being already not ill-furnished, all things considered, with a large rush mat and a lamp. Our host, however, proposed further hospitalities. We were well supplied with water, then with a charcoal stove for heating our soup, and finally with excellent and spotlessly clean bedding. The arrival of guests at so late an hour proved somewhat disturbing to the domestic animals housed in the courtyard, who crowed, and quacked, and barked, and mewed, according to their nature. Khalil came in to say good-night, the Bedu to be paid, the gigantic negro to inquire after our comfort, various black and white cats to solicit alms; but finally all was quiet, and we had not long to wait for sleep.

We were up betimes next morning, and enjoyed an early toilet beside the Fâria, not without a passing thought of pity for friends in England, and the different conditions which would make it less attractive there to rise at half-past five on the 10th of January, and bathe

in a mountain stream. We were in the rich oasis of Karâwa, the Koreæ of Josephus, famous in ancient times for the finest sugar-canes known. Westward rose the great peak of the Karn Sartabeh, towering 2227 feet above us, although only 1243 feet above sea-level. This was one of the chain of peaks upon which, in old times (according to the Talmud), beacon fires were lighted at the time of the new moon, especially to proclaim the harvest and thanksgiving festivals. The top is covered with ruins, which, with much else in this practically unknown district, we hope some time to explore thoroughly.

Khalil, who had slept out all night, to take care of his horses, complained loudly of the cold; but our soldier, whom everyone here addressed as "Haj," denoting that he had made the Mecca pilgrimage, was quite cheery and unashamed, probably much relieved that we had entered no complaint of his incompetence at the serai. Khalil assured us of his own entire ability to take charge of the party; but as the infallible Baedeker says that for the journey in the west Jordan valley "an escort is indispensable," we decided to take our soldier on to Jericho. His weapons, though rust-eaten,

looked quite effective, and for anything we knew his gun might really have gone off in an emergency, or as the kind friend in Jerusalem who provided part of our own armoury had advised, when a good echo made it "worth while to bang away."

The greatest interest to-day lay in the number of Tells, which might well repay more careful attention than has yet been bestowed upon them, and which indicate that, in spite of the forcing-house temperature of this district, it must have been at one time fairly well populated.

Our curiosity was aroused by a group of large birds perched on a rock at some little distance, and apparently motionless. We shouted at them, but they declined to rise. We discovered through our field-glasses that they were vultures, at least a score in number, and included a pair of young ones, no bigger than hens, and of a creamy white.

We were not long in reaching the pleasant Ain Fesail, the head of the Wady Fesail, which runs down into the Wady el Abyad, and meets the Jordan in the valley some two or three miles below. Here were wide green meadows, shady trees, and abundance of water, which, for the first time since last night's adventures, incited

our horses to some return of cheerfulness. We had time to linger and to explore the adjacent ruins of Phasælis, and the animals were relieved of all their encumbrances that they might enjoy a roll in the fresh grass. The Lady rejoiced especially on behalf of Sadowi, who had been lately so much depressed that she had conceived the theory that the journey, which, owing to circumstances, had been slow, and therefore in some respects tedious, had been too much for him. She had even shown a sentimental desire to walk up hills, had not the Doctor sternly refused to remount her should she carry it into effect. Whether a whole field of grass all at once had the effect of intoxication upon a Jerusalem horse—the chance of a lifetime—or whether it suddenly dawned upon him that yonder were the hills of Judæa, and that he was, therefore, within twenty-four hours of home, we shall never know, but the steady Sadowi suddenly threw care, not to say respectability, to the winds, and started on a *fantasia* of his own. He tore off like a war-horse at sound of the trumpet, a hunter at sight of the hounds, a saucy colt in the meadows. The other horses, stimulated by evil example, executed minor interludes; Khalil and the haj scampered right and left, and one by one brought

in the truants, all but the ringleader, Sadowi, who entirely refused to be caught, and we advised Khalil to desist, in the hope that he would return of his own accord. Some time later, a shout from Khalil roused our attention, and we saw him leading in a sedate and repentant Sadowi by the halter. "He ran and ran from me like the devil himself," explained his master, with some confusion of ideas, "when all at once he became afraid, and stood and trembled." The Lady seized the occasion to express a hope that this came from no recollection of previous ill-treatment, upon which Khalil threw his arms round the creature's neck, and kissed him passionately. He kicked and swore at him a few minutes later, but the horse seemed equally indifferent to both processes.

The ruins close by are those of Phasælis, a town which Herod the Great named after his brother Phasælus, and which he presented to his sister Salome, who left it to her friend, Julia Livia, the wife of the Emperor Augustus. It stood beside the excellent highroad which we had for some time been following, and which seems to have extended the whole way from Jericho up to Cæsarea Philippi, at the foot of Mount Hermon, and near the source of the Jordan,

probably bordered by a forest of palms, at one time extensively cultivated here. The town has no architectural beauty, but, like the twin town of Archelais, is delightfully situated.

It was unfortunate that we had not been advised to make the slight detour up to the foot of the hills to visit the ruins of El Aujeh, and still more that we missed the caverns of Es Sumrah, some ten miles south, described by Tristram. They are sandstone quarries, resembling those known as Solomon's quarries in Jerusalem, and have been worked so as to resemble huge grottoes. Tristram counted fifty-four pillars still left, and gives an interesting description of the traces of the wild beasts by which they are at present tenanted, and of the bones of camels, oxen, and sheep, which had been their victims.

The ride over the wide plain was exhilarating. Some of the party could now press forward, as we were nearing a more frequented district, and even the Lady was convinced that there was no need to spare the horses. As we neared Jericho we found ourselves enveloped in a sudden dust-storm, and had to give up certain schemes for botanising in the neighbourhood. Even next morning we were warned to be off without delay,

in order to secure good weather for the ride to Jerusalem.

The last scene of our drama reminded us, effectually, that we had got back to "the cab-shafts of civilisation," as represented by the Turkish Government. We found the courtyard of the Inn of the Good Samaritan crowded with soldiers, and the level ground all about with laden donkeys; while excited fellahin shouted and cursed and quarrelled, or—a sight rare and pathetic among Arabs—sat still. They were peasants from the village of Bethany, returning home with corn from Moab, and intercepted by the tax-gatherers, who saw an excellent opportunity for their business. One poor wretch who had sought to escape them by making his way round through the hills had been seized, and was now in custody in the inn-yard. The worthy host was absent, but was efficiently represented by his two little boys, who ought to have been playing marbles or whipping tops, but were, instead, keeping up the character of the establishment, and perfectly capable of dealing with the problems before them, even to catching the chickens and turkeys, and shutting them up that they might not be robbed by the soldiers, who were here to see that the peasants were

effectually robbed by the tax-gatherers, while they, the little boys, in turn showed considerable experience in robbing their guests.

From the point of view of the continuity of history and the homogeneousness of humanity it is at least interesting to know that even now, with all modern improvements of robbers licensed, uniformed, and salaried, one may still go down from Jerusalem to Jericho and be quite certain of falling among thieves.

But the storm did not come. The sun was bright, the air was clear, kind friends awaited us in Jerusalem, and we were content to believe that the desert of life has many oases :

“ Is not the pilgrim’s toil o’erpaid
By the clear rill and palmy shade ! ”

INDEX

- ABBASIDES, 110
 'Abd el hamid Bey, 104, 133
 Abdallah, 182, 191
 Abisha, 198
 Abraham, 24, 177, 202, 209, 222
 Abu-dis, 5
 Acacias, 22, 253, 311 (*farnesiana*,
tortilis, *seyal*)
 Academy of France, 61, 62
 Acre or Akko, 247, 252, 256
 Acropolis, 238, 308
 Adam Smith, Professor George, 72,
 202, 204, 235
 Adonis, 253
 Adummim, 9
 Adwân, 118
 Ægean, 234
 Agriculture, elementary, 125, 146
 — English, 227
 — German, 248
 — scientific, 38
 Ahab, 204, 205, 215
 Ahaziah, 235
 Ain Es-Shech, 160, 167
 Ain Es-Sultan, 14
 Ain El-Mastaba, 146
 Ain et Tâbigba, 287 (*see* Bethsaida)
 Ain Fesail, 341
 'Ajlûn, 100, 127
Akal, 4, 24, 48
 Al Chirnik, 66
 Alexander, 199
 Alexander the Great, 207
 Algeria, 279
 Allah, 31, 76
 Almonds, 171, 253
 Altar, 232, 233, 239
 Ammân, 94, 101, 105, 106, 107, 113,
 116, 118, 119, 124, 125, 128,
 129, 131, 132, 138, 139, 140,
 141, 148, 301
 Ammon, 126
Ammoperdix heyi, 33
 Amphitheatre, 308, 315, 316
 Amulets, Jewish, 13
Anastatica, 36
 Anatolia, 104
 'Anazeh, 96, 100
 Anemones, 203, 228, 245, 253
 Angel, 318
 Animals, wild, 32, 33, 255
 Anthony, 13
 Antiques, 196, 231, 239, 240, 324
 Antoninus Martyr, 271, 276
Apocynacea, 35
 Apostles' Fountain, 8
 Apples, 204
 "Apple of Sodom," 36
 Apricot-tree, 107, 108, 204
 Aqueduct, 8, 235, 239, 286, 297,
 329
 Arabia, 43, 54
 — Central, 7, 40
 — Roman, 69
 Arab steed, 5, 6
 Arabs, 17, 48, 66
 — characteristics, 112, 181, 182,
 213, 251, 325, 333

- Arabs, customs, 122, 296, 299
 — effect of climate upon, 12
 — good cooking among, 114, 237
 — superstitions of, 66
 — their dress, 24
 — their indifference to surroundings, 47
 — their lack of initiation, 12
 — traditions and sayings of, 71, 75, 76, 82, 127, 284, 326, 332
 Arak, 311
 Arbutus, 253
 Archæologist, 54, 55, 62, 80, 86, 101, 230, 232
 Archelais, 338, 344
 Archelaus, 338
 Architecture, domestic, 16
 — ecclesiastical, 68, 72
 — Byzantine, 83
 — Greek, 205, 282
 — Sassanian, 84
 Arculf, 258
 Ard' Abdallah, 46
 Arimathea, 104
 Ark of the Covenant, 188
 Arnon, 108, 126
 Arrow-head, 91
 Artemesium, 99
Artemisia, 128
 Artist, the, 179
 Arums, 91, 98, 253
 Arvanitaki, M., 60
 Ascalon, 199
 Ashkenazim, 305
 Asia Minor, 63, 84, 103
 Asparagus, 278
 Asphodel, 254
Asplenium-trichomanes, 253
 Asses, 24
 Assumptionist Order, 62
 Assyrians, 206
 Astarte, 233, 314
 Augusta, 207
 Augustus, 207, 343
 Azalea, 253, 306
 Azedarach (Pride of India), 311
 BAAL, 46, 68, 207, 216, 233
 Ba'albek, 108, 127
 Baana, 233
 Bab-el Allah, 76
 Babylon, 234
 Bacilli (of tetanus), 9
 — (cholera), 13
 Backsheesh, 2, 22, 23, 31, 169, 193, 196, 201, 213
 Baedeker, 55, 80, 140
 "Baedeker," 179
 Balak, 46
 Balaam, 46
 Balm, 127
 Balsams, 13, 329
Balsamum Gileadense, 127
 Bananas, 11, 19, 306
 Baptism, 12
 Barak, 266
 Bar Cochba, 304
 Barley, 278
 Barnabé d'Alsace, P., 273
 Basalt, 42, 71, 311
 Bashan, 128
 Basilica, 106, 208
 Bas-reliefs, 84
 Baths, 129, 209, 297, 305, 316
 Battlefields, 227, 266, 279
 Bawâbet Allâh, 76
 Bean, 294
 Bears, 185
 Bedu cemetery, 119
 — characteristics of, 23, 24, 55, 56, 67, 80, 164, 177, 291, 294, 296
 — *versus* Circassians, 106, 129
 — customs, 135, 166
 — funeral, 121, 122
 — and Hosea, 152, 153
 — pipe, 5

- Bedu songs, poems, and folklore, 96, 97, 118, 292
- stories of, 291, 319
- superstitions among, 66
- traditions, 101
- women's dress, 120
- (See also Beni Sakr, Shech Muhammed, Beni Hasan)
- Beersheba, 202
- Beitin, 183, 185, 187
- Belad-er-Ruah*, 228
- Belka, 104-108, 111, 126, 127, 128, 155, 163, 170, 176, 334
- Benedictine convent, 8, 255, 276
- Beni Hasan, 135, 312
- Beni Jafn, 85
- Beni Sakr, 71, 83
- Benjamin, 179, 183
- of Tudela, 199
- Besan, 284, 306, 310, 314, 315, 316, 317, 324, 325, 326, 327, 328, 329
- Bethabara, 312
- Bethany, 5, 8
- Bethel, 185, 194, 220
- Bethlehem, 45, 160, 194
- Bethsaida, 287, 301
- Bethshan, 227
- Beth-shean, 314, 315
- Biever, Father, 55, 287, 288, 292
- Bint Shech Luth, 10
- Birds, 11, 17, 18, 33, 34, 43, 191, 227, 246, 254, 296, 331, 332, 341
- Bir es Zet, 185, 192
- Bishlik, 337
- Bishopric, 54, 55, 158, 210, 304
- Blackberries, 125
- Blackbirds, 17, 34
- Bliss, Dr, 53, 55, 57, 87
- Blue (colour used as protection against Evil One), 4, 66
- Boar, 32, 255
- Boaz, 239
- Bones of babies, 232, 239
- Boniface of Ragusa, 226
- Bosphorus, 63
- Bougainvillea, 252, 285
- Bowen, 195 (Bishop of Sierra Leone)
- Box Colony, 197
- Box-tree, 23
- Bridge, 22, 23, 28, 31, 141, 164, 168, 170, 307
- Brook Cherith, 15, 34, 175
- Brothers of St John the Divine, 263, 269
- Browning, 51, 78
- Brünnow, Professor, 54, 85
- Bulbul, 296
- Bulrushes, 331
- Burckhardt, 108, 109, 110, 111, 155
- Burial monument, 46
- Burton, Sir Richard, 87
- Byzantine architecture, 83
- churches, 70, 110
- priest, 63
- Caccabis saxatilis*, 33
- Cactus, 226
- Cæsar, 207
- Cæsarea, 199
- Caifa, 247
- Cairns, 90
- Calcium, 10
- Calf, 185
- Callirhoe, 45, 306
- Calotropis procera*, 36
- Camels, 12, 24, 38, 64, 66, 146, 263
- in their natural surroundings, 65
- droppings, 41, 75
- Camel's hair, 4, 24, 293
- Campanulas, 278
- Campus Legionis, 235
- Cana, 270, 271, 272 (see Kefr Kenná)
- Canaan, 232
- Canaanites, buildings of, 233

- Candlestick, seven-branched, 187
 Capernaum, 297, 298, 301
 Capers, 278
 Capitals, 56, 87, 119, 120, 142,
 189, 211, 214, 298, 305, 316
Capota, 290
 Caravans, 23, 74, 75, 76, 149
 Carmel, Mount, 190, 202, 228, 237,
 244, 246, 247, 248, 249, 251,
 252, 255, 266
 Carmelites, 249, 257
 Carnelian, 212
 Carobs, 204, 253
 Carpets, 156
 Carts, 104, 105
 Casale St Giles, 186
 Castal, 70, 71, 94
 Castle, Arab, 278
 — Arabian, 233
 — Belvoir, 310
 — at Castal, 95
 — of Crusaders, 12, 185, 264
 — of Es-Salt, 158
 — mediæval, 9
 — of Mshatta, 79
 — of Lazarus, 8
 — Saracenic, 70
 Cat, 25, 32, 251
 Cathedral, 57, 207, 210
 Caucasus, 103, 104
 Cave, 16, 101, 203, 285
 Cemetery, 119, 224, 272, 274
 Cenotaph, 101
 Censer, 240
 Centaureas, 254, 332
 Central Arabia, 7, 40
 Central Asia, 76
 Central Palestine, 219
 Chameleons, 278
 Chapel (Rijal el-'Amud), 190
 — of St Simon Stock, 25
 Charcoal-burners, 150, 153
 Chariot, 205, 314
 Chariton, St, 15
 Chats, 227, 331 (*saxicola libano-
 tica*)
 Cheetahs, 32
 Cherith, 15, 34, 175
Cheilanthes fragrans, 253
 Chiff-chaffs, 227
 Chlorides, 330
 Chloride of calcium, 10
 — of magnesium, 10
 Cholera, 2, 13, 75, 76, 157, 160,
 169, 212, 284
 Chorazin, 301
 Chosroes II., 53, 83, 84, 85, 125
 Christian Brothers, 262
Chromis paterfamilias, 290
Chromis simonis, 290
 Chrysanthemum, 253, 254, 332
 Chub, 108
 Church, Christian, 71, 158, 298
 — Greek, 57, 58, 148, 195, 210
 — Latin, 148, 149, 270, 271
 Churches, 55, 60, 195, 202, 275
 — Byzantine, 70, 110
 Church of the Annunciation, 264,
 265, 268
 — of Mount Carmel, 257
 — of Crusaders, 12, 264
 — of St Elias, 275
 — mediæval fortress, 189
 — of Knights of St John, 181
 — of St Louis, 255
 — of St Margaret, 255
 — of the Sovereign Mother of God,
 57
 — of the Holy Sepulchre, 211
Cinnyris osee, 34
 Circassians, 24, 76, 90, 97, 102,
 103, 105, 110, 111, 118, 125,
 127, 129, 134, 137, 138, 147,
 158, 277
 Circle, stone, 45, 46
 Circus, 129, 143, 216
 Cistern, 14, 68, 81, 219, 285
 Cities, 67, 235, 236, 238, 282

- Civilisation, 45, 80, 110, 176
 Clay, 10
Clarias macracanthus, 290
Clematis cirrhosa, 253
 Clermont-Ganneau, Mons. 59, 61
 Cléopas, Père, 58, 60, 61, 62
 Cleopatra, 13
 Climate, 12
 Cock, 187
 Codex, Samaritan, 198
 Coffee, 111, 133, 136
 Coins, 196, 212, 315
 College, 196
 Colocynth, 228
 Colonies, 47, 83, 95, 104
 Colonists (German), 12, 105, 247, 252, 259
 Columns, 45, 109, 110, 119, 129, 130, 141, 142, 143, 185, 189, 205, 207, 209, 216, 298, 305, 316, 344
 Commerce, 13, 159
 Conder, 236
 Conduits, 14, 110
 Confessors, 315
 Constantinople, 63
 Constantine, 264
 Consuls, 248, 257, 313
 Convent, Benedictine, 8
 — at Mount Carmel, 252, 255
 — at Es-Salt, 153
 — at Nablûs, 193, 201
 — at Nazareth, 260
 — of St Pierre, 292
 Tiberias, 297
Coracinus, 290
 Corinthian architecture, 56, 95, 109, 142, 143, 189, 298, 311
 Corn, 329
 Corn-crakes, 227
Corvus affinis, 33
 Cotton, 195
 Cranes' bills, 227
 Crocuses, 91, 227, 253
 Cromlech, 148
 Crosses, 71, 211
 Crusades, 158, 315
 Crusaders, 12, 15, 104, 175, 181, 186, 207, 211, 252, 264, 303, 304
 Crystal, 212
 Cuckoo, 34
 Cufic inscriptions, 70, 71
 — coins, 196
 Cultivation, 43, 45, 55, 252, 279
 Curtiss, the late Professor, 223
 Cyclamen, 253
 DAISIES, yellow, 227, 278
Damascina, capota, 290
 Damascus, 72, 74, 76, 84, 87, 101, 125, 177, 199, 314
 Dames de Nazareth, 262
 Dancing, 166, 294
 Dates, 29, 39, 329
 David, 222
 Dead Sea, 9, 10, 17, 32, 163, 173, 216, 328
 Dead Sea fruit (*calotropis procera*), 36
 Dead Sea valley, 43
 Deborah, 181, 232
 Decapolis, 127, 128, 129, 301, 315
 Decius, 315
 "Decline and Fall," 83
 Deerhound, 291
 Derwish, 75, 76, 162, 317
 Dhaher, 247
 Diel, 294, 301
 Diocletian, 315, 329
 Diseases, 221, 306
 Divorce (documents of), 13
 Doctor, the, 2
 Documents (divorce), 13
 Dog, 25, 94, 205
 Dog-bane (*apocynacea*), 35
 Dolmen, 45, 46, 273

- Dolomite, 42
 Dominican, 53, 55, 61
 Donkey, 5, 8, 30, 45, 49, 107, 159
 Dor, 227
 Doric origin, 68
 Dôtân, 218
 Dothan, 218
 Doura, 278
 Dove, Indian turtle- (*turtur risorius*),
 33
 Drake, Tyrwhitt, 87
 Droppings, 41, 75, 128
 Druses, 255, 292, 294, 295, 296
 Durand, Père Germer, 62
 Dyeing-sheds, 297

 EAGLES, 331
 Ebal, Mount, 191, 192, 194, 201
 Ebenezer, 220
 Edinburgh Medical Mission, 263
 Egypt, Lower, 58
 El Aujeh, 344
 El Bireh, 179, 180, 183
 Elders, 253
El-Ghor, 328, 329, 331
 El Hammâm, 316
 Eli, 188
 Elijah, 17, 171, 256, 266
 — Fountain of, 14, 15
 — hiding-place of, 15, 16
 Elisha, 185, 204, 208, 275
 El Lubban, 192
 Emir Nûh Bey, 103, 139
 Emperor, German, 212, 297
 Emperor Heraclius, 85
 Endor, 228, 269
 En-gannim, 224
 Engedi, 36
 Ephesus, 63
 Ephraim, 183, 187, 208
 Epiphany, 13, 292
Epistle of an Arab Physician, 78
 Er-Rashid, 88
 Eryngo, 278

 Escort, 5, 6, 95, 118, 138, 340
 Esdraelon, 227, 228, 266
 Es-Salt, 50, 145, 153, 154, 155,
 156, 157, 158, 159
 Essenes, 16
 Es Sumrah, 344
 Et Tâbigha, 284, 297
 Et-tayyibeh, 187
 Eusebius, 95, 235
 Evil One, 4, 66
 Excavation, 236, 238, 297, 316
 — Austrian, 231
 — German, 230, 231
 Excavations, 215, 227
 Ezekiel, 47
 Ezra, 198
 Ez-Zerka 126

 FALCON, LANNER-, 99
Farnesiana, 22
 Fauna, 11
Felis caligata, 32
Felis-mas, 253
 Fellahin, 23, 24, 49, 80, 106, 119
 135, 140, 292, 293
 Fennel, 278
 Feral cat, 25
 Fergusson, 83
 Ferhad, 84
 Ferns, 253
Ficus sycomorus, 14 (mulberry fig)
 Figs, 17, 29, 39, 287
 Fig-tree, 160, 187.
 Firearms, 213
 Fish, 108, 286, 289, 290
 Flax, 329
 Flint arrow-head, 91
 Flintlock, 213
 Flora, 11, 12, 35, 43, 91, 98, 99,
 203, 227, 228, 245, 252, 253,
 273, 278, 288
 Folklore, 186, 292
 Fords, 21
 Forests, 127, 149

- Fortress, 158, 209, 211, 217, 227,
234, 238, 239, 316, 327
Forts, Roman, 68, 83, 94
Forum, 110, 129, 141, 142, 209,
216, 282
Fountain, Apostles', 8
— Elijah's, 14, 15
Foxes, 32 (*canis niloticus*, *canis
variegatus*)
Franciscans, 61, 195, 226, 260, 262,
264, 265, 268, 270, 272, 275,
276, 289, 291, 297
Francolin, 33
Frenjy, the, 196, 201, 259, 280
Fruit, 125, 156, 170, 204, 228
Fruit, Dead Sea (*calotropis procera*),
36
Fulke, King, 310
Funeral, 121
- GABINIUS, 207
Gadara, 307, 308
Galingale, 253
Galilee, 126, 167, 220, 227, 228,
269, 281, 286
Gardens, 20, 204, 205, 217, 224,
225, 226, 252, 264, 288
Gazelle, 12, 32, 90, 93, 98, 128,
292
Genista, 253
Gennesaret, plain of, 285
Geraniums, 91, 254
Gerasimos, Patriarch, 60
Gerizim, Mount, 191, 192, 194, 202
— Temple of, 202
Germans, 215, 248
Gethsemane, Garden of, 8, 284
Ghassanides, 85, 129
Gibbon, 83
Gideon, 125, 266
Gilboa, 228, 237
Gilead, 127, 128, 145, 265, 315,
328
Giovanni of Frascati, Brother, 256
- Gladioli, 253
Goats, 25, 56, 123
Goat's hair, 4, 293
Good Samaritan, Khan of, 6, 9,
176, 345
Gorge of brook Cherith, 15, 16
17, 18, 146, 147, 159
Gothic cathedral, 207
Government, the, 195
Grakle, 17, 34
Grapes, 156, 158
Gravel limestone, 42
Graves, 119, 152, 221 (*see also
Wely*)
Great Plain, 272
Greeks, 53, 199, 249, 260, 262
Greenstone, 42
Griffon-vulture, 99, 331
Grottoes, 101, 344
Grouse, sand, 33
Grove, Sir George, 198
Guelder-roses, 253
Guide, 51, 214, 323, 324, 326, 327
Guy de Lusignan, King, 279
- HADRAMAT, 90
Haifa, 72, 244, 246, 247, 248, 252,
255, 256, 258, 259
Haj, 75, 99, 100, 175, 340, 342
Haji, 172
Haj road, 74
Hannah, 188
Haram, 28
Haroun-er-Raschid, 233
Harvest, 48
Haurân, 7, 85, 100, 111, 135
Hawkweeds, 332
Hawthorns, 253
Hayil, 89
Hebrides, Outer, 186, 295
Hebron, 177, 194, 222, 270, 303
Heesh, 157
Hêhl, 133, 136
Helena, 271, 275

- Henna, 4
 Heraclius, Emperor, 85
 Herbs, balsamic, 278
 Hermitages, 15, 18, 285
 Hermon, 188, 191, 280, 281, 284, 306, 334
 Herod, 13, 126, 207, 216, 281, 282, 285, 338, 343
 — palace of, 14
 Heshbon, 45, 47
 Hierapolis, 84
 High places, 68
 Highwaymen, 49
 Hill of the Cock (*Jebel ed deek*), 187
 Hill—Tel'at ed-Dam, 9
 Hills, 31, 43, 128, 147, 163, 191, 228, 265, 269, 310, 328
 Hippodrome, 207, 209, 216, 316
 “*Historical Geography*,” 202, 204
 Holofernes, 315
 Hornstone, 253
 Horses, 4, 6, 24
 Hosea, 152, 223
 Hospice, Franciscan, 283
 — German Catholic Palæstina Verein, 287, 289, 291
 — at Haifa, 248, 249
 — of the Knights of St John, 181
 — Nazareth, 261, 263
 Hospital, Austrian, 269
 — at Carmel, 256
 — at Haifa, 248
 — Nazareth, 263
 — of the Templars, 195
 — at Tiberias, 283, 303, 323
 Hospitality, 51, 119, 131, 153, 156, 171, 173, 176, 255, 260, 287
 Hospitallers, 279
 Hotels, 20, 260, 283
 Hûsh or Hûshi, 104
 Hyacinths, 253
 Hyæna, 12, 32, 151, 255
 Hyrcanus, 54, 202, 207
 Hypnotic suggestion, 221
 IBEX, 32
 Ibn Rashid, 89
 Idol, 239
 Ignatius, 276
 Incense, Israelitish altar of, 233
 Indian turtle-dove, 33 (*turtur risorius*)
 Inn of the Apostles' Fountain, 8
 — of the Good Samaritan, 9, 176
 Inscription, 57, 70, 71, 275
 Institute of British Architects, 84
 Institutions, 186, 263
 Invocation, 231
 Ionic capitals, 142
 Irises, 253
 Isaac, 74, 202
 Isaiah, 208
 Ishmaelites, 127
 Israel, 46, 189
 Israelites, 54, 223, 224, 235
 Issachar, 224
 “Italian, the,” 229, 237, 238
Itineraries, 95
 JABBOK, 108, 116, 123, 124, 125, 126, 127, 128, 146, 312, 334
 Jachin, 239
 Jackals, 11, 32, 151, 255
 Jacob, 124, 125, 185, 192
 Jael, 245
 Jaffa, 45, 202, 270
 Jahwe, 233
 Jalûd, 310, 325
 Jar, 85, 240, 271
 Jaulân, 85, 104
 Jeba, 217
 Jebel es-Shech, 306, 334
 Jebel Osha, 152, 173, 334
 Jehonadab, 204
 Jehu, 204, 216
 Jenin, 203, 217, 224, 226, 227
 Jerash, 105, 106, 118, 139, 145, 148, 210, 216, 301
 Jerboa, 34, 331

- Jeremiah, 47, 189
 Jericho of crusading times, 14
 Jericho, 8, 11, 13, 19, 20, 50, 127,
 164, 175, 312, 344
 — plain of, 12, 21
 — road to, 5, 6
 — Roman, 13, 14
 Jericho-roses, 35 (*anastatica*)
 Jeroboam, 185, 188
 Jerome, St, 189, 208, 235, 276, 304
 Jerusalem, 5, 11, 45, 102, 122, 175,
 183, 194, 197, 303, 304
 Jessamine, 252
 Jezebel, 215, 216
 Jezreel, 227, 310
 Jifna, 185, 186, 192
 Jisr el Mujamia, 307
 Job or Joab, 123
 Jochanan, Bishop, 317
 John the Baptist, 171, 202, 208,
 216
 Jonah, 270
 Jonquils, 245, 253
 Jordan, 11, 13, 31, 32, 45, 56, 124,
 126, 127, 145, 165, 167, 171,
 220, 307, 308, 325, 329
 — East, 90, 103, 120, 128, 257,
 294, 312
 — valley, 9, 21, 32, 35, 36, 265
 Joseph, St, 264
 Joseph, 192, 219
 Josephus, 36, 207, 274, 285, 290,
 303, 315
 Joshua, 54, 188, 199, 314
 Josiah, 235
 Jotham, 223
 Judah, 235
 Judæa, 11, 12, 163, 328
 Jujube-tree 21, 23, 37, 164 (*zizyphus*
 lotus)
 — *zizyphus spina Christi*, 21
 Julia Livia, 343
 Juniper, 253
 Justinian, 86, 195, 202
- KAFR SABT, 279
 Kaimmakâm, 155
 Kamnimotsk or Kakupschi, 103
 Karâwa, 340
 Karn Hattin, 279
 Karn Sartabeh, 340
 Keats, 64
 Keble, 286
 Kedron, valley of, 8, 123
Keffeye, 4
 Kefr Kennâ, spring of, 270
 Kerak, 53, 56, 169
 Kerosene, 196, 197
 Khalil, 30
 Khan, 160, 180, 190, 224, 225, 278,
 287, 300, 311
 Khan of the Good Samaritan, 6, 9
 Khans, Saracenic, 68
 Kings, Three, 292, 294
 Kingfisher, 332
 Kinnerôt, 280
 Kinnor (a lute), 280
 Kirbet el-Herri, 68
 Kishon, 235, 244, 245, 259
 Klein, 71
 Knights of St John, 181, 211
 Kôkab el-Hawa, 310
 Koziba, 16
 Kubâtiyeh, 220, 222
 Kumbaz, 166, 172
- LADY, the, 2
 Lagos, Ptolemy, 206
 Lake of Galilee, 167, 284, 286, 289
 Lagrange, Père, 62
"Land and the Book," 82
 Language, 25, 51
 Lanner-falcon, 99
 Lapis-lazuli, 212
 Larks, 99, 227, 331
 Latin Patriarch, 51
 Latins, 12, 52, 53, 199, 249, 260
 Law, 196, 198
 Lazarus, Castle of, 8

- Lebanon, 255
 Leeches, 8
 Lehaf, 137, 312
 Lejjun or Legio, 235, 236, 237, 242
 Lemons, 3, 17, 252
 Lepers, 195, 206, 226
 Levi, 200
 Libations, 240
 Lightfoot, 274
 Limestone, 10, 42, 43, 203, 253, 298
 Linen, 329
 Lintel, 56, 189
 Lions, 32
 Lizard, 43, 93, 98, 278, 331
 Looms, 196
 Lot, Shech, 10
 Louis, St, 255, 271
 Lower Egypt, 58
 Lubban, 190, 192
 Lupin, 254
 Lusignan, King Guy de, 279
 Lychnis, 254

 MACCABEES, 266
 Machærus, 216
 Madaba, 32, 38, 46, 49, 50, 51, 53,
 54, 55, 56, 57, 60, 62, 95, 102,
 138, 139, 148, 287, 291
 Magdala, 285, 286, 301
 Magnesium, 9
 Maiden-hair, 253, 260
 Maimonides, 304
 Maize, 278
 "Majnoon," 162
 Makhrûd, 334
Maktoub, 37
 Mâlih, 334
 Manasseh, 198, 232, 235
 Mandrakes, 203, 253
 Manuscripts, 200
 Map, mosaic, of Madaba, 57, 58, 59,
 60, 62, 63
 Marble, 56, 95, 264, 298
 Mares, 25, 27, 291

 Margaret of Provence, 271
 Margaret, St, 255
 Mariamne, 216
 Marl, 21
 Marriage, 13, 52
 Martyrs, 189, 190
 Masada, 36
 Mastaba, 146
 Maundeville, Sir John, 178, 247,
 258, 277
 Maundrell, Henry, 194
 Mausoleum, 158
 Mezeba, 239
 Meadow of Sinking In (*Merj-el-
 Gharak*), 218
 Measurement (by time), 31
 Mecca, 72, 74, 75, 172
 Medal, 196
 Mediterranean, 32, 202, 204, 280
 Megiddo, 227, 232, 235, 236, 259
 Meidân, 76
 Mejdél, 286
Melissa officinalis, 128
Mémoire, by Mons. Clermont-Gan-
 neau, 59
 Menhirs, 239
Merj-el-Gharak, 218
 Mesha, 54
 Meshalcha, Bedu, 312, 325
 Michaud, 265, 271
 Midianites, 125, 219
 Milestones, 45
 Mill, 71, 124, 148, 235, 297
 Minaret, 226, 246, 281
 Minyeh, Khan, 287, 300
 Mishna, 304
 Missionaries, 186, 249, 289
 Missions, Scottish and American, 303
 — medical, 249, 263, 287
 — *Jerusalem and the East*, 249
 Moab, 11, 22, 43, 47, 116, 117,
 126, 128, 173, 202, 208
 Moabite sparrow, 34
 Moabite stone, 68, 71

- Moabites, 54
 Monastery, 15, 16, 85, 256
 Monks, Greek, 16, 59
 Monogamy, 56
 Monograph, by Père Séjourné, 53
 — by Schumacher, 55, 140
 — by Père Lagrange and Père Cléopas
 Mongols, 158
 Monolith, 189, 214
 Monument, burial, 46, 72, 130
 “*Le Mont Thabor: Notices Historiques et Descriptives*,” 273
 Morality, 56
 Moravians, German, 195
 Mosaics, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 62, 64, 271, 275
 Moses, 42, 44, 46, 199, 222
 Mosque, 70, 110, 172, 189, 195, 207, 210, 255
 Mshatta, or Mashita, or Meshita, 71, 79, 80, 84, 93, 98, 128
 Mount Ebal, 191, 192, 194, 201
 Mount Gerizim, 191, 192, 194, 202
 — Gilboa, 228, 237
 — of Moab, 202
 — Nebo, 42, 44, 45
 — of Olives, 8, 164
 — of Precipitation, 269
 — Scopas, 179
 Mountain of the Shech, 306
 Mountains of Es-Salt, 157
 — Quarantana, 15
 Mourner, 121
 Muchtar, 106, 111
 Mudir, 131, 132, 133, 134, 135, 136, 139, 310, 311, 313, 323, 324
 Mulberry fig, 14
 Mulberry-trees, 222
 Mujedda, 236
Mukaris, 3
 Muqutṭa, 235
Muscari, 35
 Museum, 257
 Music, 96, 295
 Mutesarrif, 135
 Mykenæan pottery, 234
 Myrrh, 127
 Myrtle, 253
 NAAMAN, 204
 Nabateans, 54
 Nablûs, 179, 183, 190, 191, 193, 194, 195, 197, 199, 202, 217, 219, 312
 Nahallal, 272
 Nain, 228, 269
 Napoleon, 256
 Narghile, 30
 Nathaniel, 272
 Nawa, 106
 Naumachia, 143
 Nazareth, 228, 258, 260, 261, 262, 266
Nebk, 21
 Nebo, Mount, 42, 44, 45
 Negro, 20, 171, 338, 339
 Nets, 289
 Nightingale, 34
 Nile, 84, 125, 246
 Nimr, 96, 118
Notitia, Roman, 69, 95
 Notre Dame d’Amerique, 260
 Nysa, 315
 OAKS, 11, 105, 120, 149, 150, 157, 204, 222, 223, 253, 259
 Obadiah, 208
 Odeum, 109
 Officials, 24, 248
 Oleander, 23, 35, 123, 126, 286, 306, 332
 Oliphant, Hans, 248
 Oliphant, Laurence, 244
 Olives, 148, 187, 204
 Olives, Mount of, 8
 Omar, 312

- Omri, 54, 206
 Orabs, 17
 Orange, 19, 20, 127, 252
 Orchis, 253
 Origen, 276
 Ornithogalums, 332
 Orphanage of Dames de Nazareth,
 262
 — English, 263
 — Salesian Fathers, 260
Oshr, 36
 Oxen, 25, 104
- PALACE, 86, 87, 88, 142, 215
 Palace of Herod, 14, 207, 282
 Palestine, 58, 63, 219
 — Eastern, 126, 129
 — Exploration Fund, 62, 71, 87
 Palmer, Paul, 62
 Palms, 11, 13, 127, 181, 224, 226,
 246, 252, 281, 284, 306
 Panther, 255
 Pariah dog, 25
 Partridge, 33
 — (Hey's) *ammoperdix heyi*, 33
 — (Greek) *caccabis saxatilis*, 33
 Pasha, the, 95
 — of Acre, 217, 256
 — of Damascus, 156
 Passover, The, 198, 200
 Patriarch, Gerasimos, 60
 — Greek, 57, 59, 60, 61, 62
 — Latin, 51, 155
 Patriarchate in Jerusalem, 193, 195
 Paul, St, 268
 Paula, 271, 276
 Peacock, Thomas Love, 112
 Pears, 204
 Pella, 306, 312, 326
 Pentateuch, 199
 Peræa, 7, 125, 126
 Periwinkle, 35, 253
 Père Cléopas, 58, 60, 61, 62
 Père Germer Durand, 62
 Père Séjourné, 53, 55, 57
 Père Vincent, 61
 Persian art, 81
 Persian Gulf, 76
 — king, 83
 Personage, the Royal, 2, 40
 Peter, St, 276
 Phasælis, 342, 343
 Philadelphia, 116
 Phinehas, 198
 Phœnicians, 246
 Piasters, 31, 50, 52, 157, 337
 Piedmontese, 51
 Pigeons, 33
 — rock, 18
 Pilasters, 87, 95
 Pilgrims, 13, 14, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78,
 256, 263, 298
 Pillar, 120, 239
 Pines, 11, 105, 150
 Pipes, native, 5, 40
 Pistachios, 171
 Plague, 75
 Plain of Esdraelon or Jezreel, 227,
 228
 — of Sharon, 228
 — of Gennesaret, 285
 — of El-Makhna, 191
 Plateau, 64, 126
 — of Ard 'Abdallah, 46
 — of Ard el Hammâ, 280
 Plough, 45, 119, 191, 221, 227
 Plovers, 227
 Poem, 66
 Poet, 96, 118
 Polygamy, 56
 Pomegranate, 253
 Pompey, 207, 315
 Pool, 14, 55, 205
 Poor Clares, 260
 Poplars, 223, 332
 Population, 23, 107, 155, 195, 249
 Potteries, 297
 Pottery, 234

- Presbytery, 51, 53, 148, 272
 Pride of India, 311
 Priest, high, 200
 — Byzantine, 63
 — Greek, 58, 180
 — parish, 51, 55, 56, 155, 157
 Priests, 51, 52
 “*Primitive Semitic Religion To-day*,” 223
 Professor, the, 2
 Prophet, the, 74, 125, 189
 Prophets, Jewish, 190, 256
 Propylæa, 141, 142
 Proscenium, 142
 Psalms, 116, 117
Pseudo-platanus, 14
 Ptolomais, 247
 Ptolemy Lagos, 207
 Ptolemy Philadelphus, 116
 Pudding-stone, 42
- QUAKERS, 186
 Quarantana mountain, 15
 Quarantine, 2, 31, 160, 165, 169
Quercus agrifolia, 149
- RAB JOCHANAN BEN SAKAI, 304
 Rabbath Ammán, 116
 Rabbi Akiba, 304
 — Meir, 304
 Rags, 220, 228
 Rahab, 15
 Railway, 72, 73, 88, 99, 108, 211, 229, 236, 246, 249, 307, 308
 Raisins, 29, 156, 158
 Rakkath, 282
 Rahwân, 5, 27
 Ramah, 179
 Ramleh, 104, 189
 Ranunculus, 254
 Rat, 125
 Ravens, 17, 331
 Raven, wedge-tailed (*corvus affinis*), 33
- Rebecca, 185
 Rechab, 205
Recueil d'Archéologie Orientale, 59
 Red Sea, 76
 Reservoirs, 55, 69, 185, 316
 “Rischân” or “Rischi,” 292
 Road, 44, 67, 74, 83, 95, 118, 141, 183, 186
 Robinson, 235
 Rocks, 42, 43, 253
 Rock garden, 252
 — rose, 253
 — pigeons, 18
 Rolls of the Law, 196
 Roman Catholics, 12, 196
 — colonies, 83, 99
 — Arabia, 69
 — forts, 68, 83, 94
 — forum, 110
 — marches, 85
 — *Notitia*, 69
 — province, 86
 — remains, 70, 142, 235, 297, 308, 316
 — road, 44, 67, 83, 95, 118, 125, 141, 144
 — soldiers, 47
 — tiles, 87
 — toparchies, 186
 Rooks, 191, 227
 Roots, 149
 Rosaries, 157
 Rose bushes, 225, 288
 Roses, Jericho- (*anastatica*), 36
 Rotunda, 141, 142
 Ruins, 53, 54, 67, 68, 71, 106, 108, 109, 140, 141, 148, 181, 186, 207, 247, 273, 275, 278, 297, 298, 338, 340
- SA'B-EL-MESHAK, 6
 Sacrifice, 91, 250, 319
 Sadowi, 27, 28, 161, 162, 182, 258, 325, 335, 342, 343

- Sæwulf, 302
Safsaf, 22
 Saint, 221, 223, 318
 Saint Chariton, 15
 — Moslem, 120, 189
 — Old Testament, 220
 Saladdin, 158
 Salesians, 260, 262
 Salisbury, Bishop of (1192), 265
 Sallah ed-din, 279, 287, 310, 315
 Salome, 343
 Salt, 10, 14, 21
Saltana, 156
 Samaria, 191, 203, 204, 206, 219, 228, 328
 Samaritan, Good, Khan of, 6, 9, 176, 345
 Samuel, 188
 Samovar, 136, 139
 Samaritans, 198, 199, 201, 226
 Sanatorium, 248
 Sand-grouse, 33
 Sand-stone, 42, 344
 Sanhedrin, 304
 Sandwort, 43
 Saniye, 135
 Sânr, 217
 Sâra, 158
 Saracens, 85
 Saracenic khans, 68
 Sarcophagi, 71, 101, 110, 119, 216, 270, 308
 Sargon, 315
 — bas-reliefs, 84
 Sassanian dynasty, 84
 Saul, 266, 314
Saxicola libanotica, 331
 Scarabs, 234
 Schools, 195, 196, 226, 262, 263, 305
 Schumacher, 55, 56, 72, 90, 96, 100, 104, 135, 140, 249, 257, 312
 Scopas, Mount, 179
 Scrolls of the Law, 198
 Sculpture, 70, 71, 81, 142, 189, 211, 214, 316
 Scythopolis, 315
 Sea-birds, 246
 Sea, Dead, 9, 10, 17, 32
 Seal, 196, 234, 240
 Sebaste, 203, 205, 207, 210, 211, 213, 215
 Sect, esoteric, 16
 Sedge-grass, 331
 Seetzen, 111
 Séjourné, Père, 53, 55, 57
 Selim Effendi Khuri, 252
 Sellin, Doctor, 233
 Semûniyeh, 259
 Sepulchre, Holy, 195
Serai, 224, 313, 318, 327, 337, 338
 Sesame, 278
 Settlements, Greek, 12
 — Russian, 12
 — Samaritan, 196, 197
Seyal, 22
 Sharon, 104, 228, 255
 Shech, 51, 56, 71, 74, 120, 209, 211, 291, 300, 319, 330
 Shech Abdallah, 46
 Shech Goblan, 118
 Shech Lot, 10
 Shech Shadli, 313
 Shech Muhammed, 100
 Shechem, 194, 219
 Shelley, 93
 Shiloh, 188, 189, 194
 Shiraz, 84
 Shireen, 84
 Shop, curiosity, 9
 Shrine, 223
 Shunem, 269
Sidr, 21
Silene, 35
 Simon Stock, St, 257
 Singing, 96, 97, 99, 166

- Sisera, 245
 Sisters of Charity, 263
 — of St Joseph, 263
 — of the Rosary, 155
 Skylarks, 227
 Smith, Prof. G. A., 72, 202, 204,
 235
 Smyrna, 63
 Snails, land-, 99
 Soap, 195
 Soapwort, 43
 Sodom, apple of, 36
 Sœurs de Charité, 195
Solanum sanctum, 36
 Soldiers, Circassian, 90, 135
 — Egyptian, 12
 — Jewish, 285
 — Roman, 47
 Solomon, 188, 235, 239
 Sparrows, 11, 34, 227
 Sportsmen, 2
 Spring, 158, 181, 185, 190, 205,
 270, 279
 Springs, hot, 45, 297, 308
 Squills, 35, 253
 Stallions, 6, 24
 Star of Bethlehem, 253
 Starlings, 11, 227
 Statues, 142
 Stocks, 254, 332
 Stones, 220, 318
 Stone of Abraham, 177
 Stone circle, 45, 46, 185
 Stone, Moabite, 54, 68, 71
 Storks, 332
 Sugar-cane, 329
 Suggestion, hypnotic, 221
 "Sultana," 156
 Sultan's Spring, 14, 15
 Sumach, 156
 Sun-bird, *cinneryis oseæ*, 34, 254
 Superstitions, 66, 77, 298
 Swallows, 17, 93, 125, 316
 Sycaminium, 247
 Sycomore, 14
 Synagogue, 200, 298, 303
 Syrians, 206
 Syria, 14, 30, 80, 105, 125, 246,
 250
 Szaltese, 156
 TAANAK, 227, 229, 232, 233, 235,
 236
 Tabor, 224, 229, 237, 266, 274,
 277
 Talmud, 304, 340
 Tamarisk, 23, 34, 253, 332
 Tank, 69, 70
 Tanneries, 297
 Tarafah, 66
 Tarbush, 24, 293, 318
 Tarichee, 286 (*see* Magdala)
 Tax, road, 45
 — war, 50
 — Tel'at ed-Dam, 9
 Taxes, general, 106, 135
 — horse, 49
 Tell, 203, 214, 229, 232, 301, 316,
 341
 — Hûm, 297
 — el Matâba, 45
 — el-Mutesellim, 235, 236, 237,
 238
 Templars, 195, 259, 279
 Temple, 68, 129, 141, 142, 185,
 199, 202, 207, 209, 239, 314
 Temptation, 15
 Terebinth, 150, 157, 219, 223
 Teskerys (local passports), 165, 193
 Tetanus, 9
 Tetracylon, 141, 142
Tfaddalu, 111
 Theatre, 109, 129, 141, 142, 143,
 207, 209, 235
 Thermæ, 106, 110
 Thieves, 5
 Thistles, 23
 Thompson, 82

- Thorns, 21, 23, 150
 Thothes III., 314
 Three Kings, the, 292, 294
 Tiberias, 13, 259, 277, 280, 281,
 282, 283, 284, 323
 Tiglath-pileser, 315
 Tithes, 200
 Tobacco, 5, 30, 40, 41, 55, 157,
 294, 338
 Tomb of 'Abdallah, 46
 — of Abdel Azziz en-Nimr Shech
 Adwân, 118, 119
 — of Abu Obeidah Ibn el Jerrâh,
 312
 — of Jonah, 270
 — of Joseph, 192
 Tombs, 110, 119, 158, 187, 192,
 239, 285, 304, 317, 318
Tombak, 30
Tortilis, 22
 Tortoises, 278
 Town of Nablûs (*see* Nablûs)
 — of ancient Jericho, 15
 Towns in ruins, 67, 68, 106, 141,
 301
 Traditions, 298
 Tradition, *re* church at el Bireh, 181
 — *re* Elijah's Fountain, 14
 — *re* the horse of Solomon, 299
 — *re* St John Baptist, 208
 — *re* ten lepers, 226
 — *re* the Miracle of turning Water
 into Wine, 270
 — *re* Nathaniel, 272
 — *re* Sermon on the Mount, 279
 — *re* workshop of St Joseph, 264
 Trajan, 129
 Transfiguration, the, 273, 275
 Tree (sacred), 190, 220, 221, 222,
 223, 227
 Trees, 21, 22, 23, 149, 150, 204,
 253, 259, 306, 311
 Tristram, 17, 36, 42, 67, 70, 71, 79,
 80, 94, 289, 344
 Troughs, stone, 119
Turtur risorius, 33
 Turban, 293
 Turcomans, 24, 146
 Turtle-dove, Indian, 33 (*turtur
 risorius*)
 UM EL-KUSEIR, 67, 68
 Um er-Resâs, 68
 Um Weleed, 67, 68
 Umshita, 79
 University, 303
 VALERIAN, 254
 Valley, Dead Sea, 43
 — Jezreel, 310
 — Jordan, 9, 36
 — Kedron, 8
 — of the Lubban, 190
 — of Sa'b-el-Meshak, 6
 Vegetation, tropical, 11, 306
 Vespasian, 329
 Village of Abu-dis, 5
 — of Ammân (*see* Ammân)
 — of Bir es Zet, 185
 — of Et-tayyibeh, 187
 — of Gath-Hepher, 270
 — of Jenin, 203, 217, 224, 227
 — of Jerash, 130, 131
 — of Jifna, 185, 186
 — of Kafr Sabt, 279
 — of Kubâtiyeh, 220, 222
 — of Madaba, 53
 — of Mastaba, 146
 — of Er-Rummâna, 146
 — of Sebaste, 213
 — of Seilun, 188
 — of Yâfâ, 260
 Villages of Bedu, 67
 — of Circassians, 106
 Vincent, Père, 61
 Vineyard, 252
 Vogüe, M. de, 211
 Vulture, 99, 331, 341

- WADI SALIH, 147
 Wady, 122, 334
 — el Abyad, 341
 — Faria, 334, 335, 339
 — Fesail, 341
 — el-Hamman, 119
 — Heshban, 36, 47
 — el-Hor, 149
 — Kelt, 15
 — Mâlih, 334
 — el-Mastaba, 146
 — Osha, 157
 — er-Rumemin, 148
 — er-Rumman, 122
 — Shaib, 159 (*see also* 160)
 — Umm Rabi, 146
 Wages, 23
 Warren, Sir Charles, 71
 Water, 14, 16, 55, 74, 108, 122,
 126, 144, 168, 194
 — of Dead Sea, 9
 — Roman system, 14, 69
 — bottles, 44
 Waterfall, 147, 297, 332
 Water-pipe, 30, 112, 114, 330
 Watka, 118, 119
 Weapons, 25, 55
 Wedge-tailed raven (*corvus affinis*),
 33
 Well of Jacob, 192, 202
 Well of Nazareth, 265
 — of Tiberias, 285
 Welys, 120, 121, 152, 160, 202,
 221, 317, 318
 Willibald, 271, 276
 Willow, 22, 332 (*safsaf*)
 Wine, 252, 271, 272, 294, 311
 Wolf, 33
 Women, 205
 Wool, 195
 Wordsworth, 20, 116, 323
 Wormwood, 99 (*artemesium*)
 Wren, long-tailed, 254 (*drymæca*
 gracilio)
 YAFA, 260
 Yakubi, 141
 Yakut, 140
 Yarmuk, 126, 127, 307
 Yemen, 85
 Yujûtz, 119
 ZADAM, 71
 Zakkum, 23
 Zebedee, 260
 Zebîb, 68
 Ziza, 69, 71
 Zizyphus lotus, 21, 23, 164
 Zizyphus spina Christi, 21

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